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ABSTRACT

This report of an investigation of the legal, fiscal, and structural issues confronting New Jersey's public libraries contains 30 recommendations that address the various problems and needs revealed by the study. Chapters discuss the challenges facing libraries in New Jersey, the funding of local libraries, the delivery of local library services, investing in library services, networking among libraries, and achieving equal access to quality library services. An appendix presents highlights of a public hearing before the commission held in January 1980. (FM)

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State of New Jersey

COUNTY & MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMISSION

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LIBRARIES AND NETWORKS

Prospective Roles and Responsibilities for Libraries in New Jersey

Nineteenth Report

June, 1980

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TO HIS EXCELLENCY GOVERNOR BRENDAN T. BYRNE, AND HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE SENATE AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

The County and Municipal Government Study Commission is pleased to submit its 19th report, THE DEVELOPMENT OF LIBRARIES AND NETWORKS. In a comprehensive study leading to the report, the Commission examined the legal, fiscal and structural issues confronting New Jersey's libraries. Based on our findings we concluded that:

> Library services are essential to the State's citizens but the ability of public libraries to provide local services is being eroded.
>
> Low funding priorities at a time of general fiscal constraints limit the ability of libraries to meet increasing demands for both local and network services.
>
> Enabling statutes for various types of libraries and development programs are inadequate and are therefore in need of revision.
>
> Strong leadership is needed to offset pressures on all libraries during a time of accelerating change. This role should be assumed by the New Jersey State Library.

The report contains 30 recommendations for action that address the various problems and needs revealed in the Commission study. These directions for change have already been discussed at a formal Commission hearing (see Appendix). We offer our continued assistance in current efforts to develop legislation based upon these recommendations.

Respectfully submitted by the members of the County and Municipal Government Study Commission:

/s/ William V. Musto, Chairman
/s/ Doris Dealaman, Vice-Chairwoman
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/s/ Samuel A. Alito, Secretary

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The Exempt Libraries Association of New Jersey; and
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Finally, the Commission expresses its deepest appreciation to its principal consultant for the study and one of New Jersey's most respected librarians, William Roehrenbeck. His personal insight provided the conceptual framework for the Commission's research on library problems in New Jersey.

The responsibility for this report, its conclusions, recommendations, and implications for libraries in New Jersey, rests solely with the Commission. Yet it can be stated that, without the assistance of these many individuals, *The Development of Libraries and Networks* could not have been written.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF LIBRARIES AND NETWORKS:

Prospective Roles and Responsibilities for Libraries in New Jersey

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Libraries have always been part of the fabric of American society. Today, libraries play an important role in the activities of business, government, hospitals, educational institutions and our local communities, serving, in general, as clearinghouses for recorded knowledge. Libraries are the major source of published materials that are available for educating our children, conducting research programs, making informed decisions and enriching our personal lives.

For publicly-supported libraries, the ability to perform this essential service role is being eroded. Inflation, growth of information and technological change have all taken their toll on the traditional practices of these libraries. Without the ability to respond to economic and institutional pressures, many publicly-supported libraries face an uncertain future.

The Commission concludes that a revision of library laws and aid programs in New Jersey is necessary in order to address these pressures adequately. Changing the legal framework for New Jersey's libraries must be combined with stronger State assistance for library services. The revised laws must also provide a flexible and up-to-date method for resource sharing among libraries on a statewide basis. In short, our libraries must be granted the means to fulfill their responsibilities to the citizens of New Jersey.

Issues Challenging New Jersey's Libraries

A number of key issues rise out of the economic and institutional pressures confronting libraries in the State. The most serious problem is getting enough money to support the broad service role of libraries. Library budget requests are often given low priority in the allocation of available funds. In many cases, this situation is made worse by legal limitations on increased spending by government. Finding the financial resources to improve or even maintain the delivery of existing services has become an almost impossible task.

Structural problems are especially apparent among both public and school libraries, stemming from the piecemeal nature of library law. Local libraries are operating under an ambiguous and increasingly outmoded set of laws. Problems such as the relationship between library governing boards and town officials, limited school library support, and conflicting service roles of county libraries all grow out of existing statutory provisions.

The central question concerning libraries is the role of the State in addressing financial and structural problems. Both the State's library assistance programs and the New Jersey Library Network were set up in response to these basic issues. However, the current aid and network programs have been in operation for more than 12 years and are beginning to show their age. The steps taken by the State to upgrade its longstanding support of libraries will be the key to maintaining a broad service role for libraries in the immediate years ahead.

The Commission's Findings

The backbone of library service to New Jersey citizens is the local library — most people desire nearby access to a community library and are looking for basic up-to-date services. A number of broad conclusions reached by the Commission acknowledge this fact and confirm the overall insufficiency of existing library laws. For example, the purchasing power of local library budgets has been declining in recent years and is starting to limit services. Especially affected is the ability of local public and school libraries to maintain services. Many libraries have been forced to purchase fewer new materials for their collections and some public libraries have curtailed the operation of branch outlets. Overall, attempts to obtain increased local appropriations have not resulted in the level of funds needed even to hold the line on new materials or hours of operation. In addition, limited accountability to local governing officials has often affected budget requests. Hence, a serious pattern of financial distress is emerging from the decline in the purchasing power of library budgets. In order to preserve the services of these libraries, local financial support will have to be stabilized quickly.

Through the assistance programs administered by the State Library, New Jersey has tried to offset the financial and service pressures on individual libraries. However, each of these programs has begun to fall short of its basic goal. For instance, the per capita aid program to public libraries is consistently underfunded by the State. This program is also losing its ability to act as an incentive for higher local funding of libraries. At the same time, State assistance for school libraries has been limited to consultative services.

Resource sharing among different types of libraries through the New Jersey Library Network is underfunded and participation is limited by outmoded statutory provisions. Networking can be the key to overcoming the practical limits to individual library resources. However it is further frustrated by instability in county library systems and fragmented planning at the State level. Overall, the State Library does not have sufficient developmental programs to offset local funding limitations, improve the provision of specific library services, or coordinate statewide resource sharing through a networking process.

In contrast, the Commission is encouraged by the proposed new State plan for library services in New Jersey. This plan is now being developed by the State Library and will subsequently become a part of the Department of Education's program to improve the process of education in New Jersey. The plan will seek to promote and improve library services to all of the State's citizens. To achieve this broad goal, the needs of all types of libraries and the concerns of the library profession are addressed in the plan. However, implementation of this proposed framework for library services will require new laws, improved State financial aid, and better intergovernmental cooperation. The Commission believes that its recommendations for libraries in New Jersey contribute to the fulfillment of this proposed statewide plan.

Improving the Development of Libraries and Networks

This report contains 30 recommendations to change the nature of New Jersey's library laws and assistance programs. The Commission's major proposals can be summarized as follows:

- **Overall financial support for public libraries should be improved by changing the legal minimum level of property tax support. Higher local government appropriations should also be encouraged by increasing the level of library aid received on the basis of tax effort.**
- **An educational mission for school libraries should be clearly established in State law. Specific responsibilities under the N.J. Public School Education Act of 1975 are necessary as a first step toward developing aid standards for school media services.**
- **The governance of public libraries should be made more accountable to local elected officials and their administrators. In addition, wider representation should be possible on county library governing boards.**
- **The organization of county library systems should be addressed by making several reorganization options available in law. A single county-wide study and referendum process would be used both to determine whether restructuring a county library's pattern of services is desirable and to adopt a selected option.**
- **The structure and functions of the New Jersey Library Network should be substantially revised in light of emerging national networks and new federal directions. The objectives of this revision would be to improve participation in the network and upgrade network services. Regional library cooperatives and a statewide bibliographic access center would be established to facilitate search and loan services.**
- **New library aid programs should be established both to offset rising costs of operation and improve the library development process in the State. Five programs of additional State aid to libraries are proposed, namely: collection development for public libraries, branch library assistance for hardship municipalities, preservation of valuable materials for qualifying libraries, assistance for regional audiovisual libraries and expanded assistance for a revised statewide library network.**
- **Coordination in planning for libraries should be established between the State Departments of Education and Higher Education. Special funds should be made available to underwrite joint activities and insure compatibility with the New Jersey Library Network.**

It has been more than 10 years since the statutes and programs to support libraries were substantially amended by the New Jersey Legislature. This report reviews the experience of libraries during this period, considers the need for change in existing governmental policies and concludes that a second major revision of the State's role in assisting libraries is necessary. The recommendations outlined above provide New Jersey's libraries with the means to continue their broad service role during the 1980s. The Commission urges both Executive and Legislative responses to these proposals. The State can do no less and still promote access to quality library services for all of its citizens.

CHAPTER 1

CHALLENGES FACING LIBRARIES IN NEW JERSEY

The winds blow but the library stands, and this may be because it has hold on a rock of purpose, whether articulated or not.
-- Lowell A. Martin, 1978

Libraries are considered a necessary part of our society. This basic belief in the library institution has held constant since the very first local libraries were established early in the history of America. As a result, a library is generally pictured as part of the essential background of the local community as a whole. While this view is still true, it is also out of date. Today libraries also play a part in business, government, hospitals, colleges, and universities. In short, wherever information is needed a library will often supply it.

Much has been written in response to questions about the nature of libraries and their ongoing development. Though there are important distinctions between the various library types, (generally categorized as public, school, academic, and special) they nevertheless share certain common features and general purposes, namely:

- acquiring a collection of reading materials and factual information;
- finding alternative sources of materials and facts;
- organizing the collection so people can use it; and,
- answering questions of people using the collection.

The actual manner in which a particular type of library carries out these functions depends upon the characteristics of the people it serves. Moreover, few libraries are really independent, most are organized as part of a larger institution or jurisdiction. This "parent" entity financially supports a library in order to satisfy its information needs. This report, *The Development of Libraries and Networks*, is concerned primarily with libraries in New Jersey that are largely supported by public funds. This group includes the public, school, and academic types of libraries. Each of these three types functions as part of the general process of public education. However, public libraries also have a broader purpose in that business and recreational library services are offered as well.

Libraries Receiving Public Tax Support

Individually, libraries tend to fall into distinct types because they are associated with particular societal roles, usually inherited from the point in time when each was first established. It is difficult, if not impossible for a library to change this basic service role once it is set. For example, one of the earliest versions of the public library is the *association*. First chartered by the early 1800s, associations were often established by a group of publicly spirited citizens in order to open private reading collections to the local townsfolk. In addition to serving as libraries, they also acted as memorials to the ideals and accomplishments of the American Revolution (as for example, the now extinct Library Company of Trenton, established by Benjamin Franklin in 1750). A number of these associations are still in operation, especially in rural areas.

Around the same period, another kind of community library began to emerge in the major cities. Supported with public funds and open to all residents of the town, they came to be called *free public libraries*. Later, *free county libraries* were formed for those towns without free public libraries. Together with the associations, the public and county libraries offer a very wide range of services since they are open to all residents, regardless of age or education.

Every type of publicly-supported library can be identified with a historical role that suggests its present overall function. Building upon their early community-wide role, public libraries currently provide for the educational, informational, recreational, and at times the cultural needs of community residents. Similarly, *school* libraries began as classroom aids and are now thought of as an integral part of the process of basic education. *Academic* libraries in colleges and universities continue to offer the wide range of recorded knowledge needed by students, scholars, and researchers. All of these libraries can be thought of as a part of the evolutionary process of their sustaining parent institutions; expanding services in order to satisfy new information needs.

Some types of libraries are really integral parts of the institutions that support them. This is especially true for school, college, university and many special libraries. In these cases, the libraries are directly accountable to the general administrators of such institutions. On the other hand, free public and county libraries are largely autonomous local agencies whose library administration and budget activities are the responsibility of an independent board. However, increasingly these libraries are becoming more integrated into the general operation of local government. This closer relationship is partly due to the rise in local fiscal pressures on the governing bodies and the resulting need for greater accountability to taxpayers.

When viewed in a historical context, these observations lead to the conclusion that publicly-supported libraries have evolved into a legitimate governmental function. Moreover, the link between the library function and government exists at *both* the local and State levels of government and provides the basis for a continuing State role in aiding the further development of libraries in New Jersey.

Encouragement by the State

In 1879, the State Legislature enacted a law allowing municipalities to form free public libraries. This was followed by another act which established a State program to assist communities in the actual provision of library services. This aid program was designed to lend library materials to municipalities, including those towns that had set up free public libraries. Overall, these two enactments represented the beginning of the State's interest in promoting local libraries in New Jersey. Since this process began in 1879, successive, often conflicting legislation, as well as a major library aid program, have expanded the State's role. Table I-1 outlines the structure and general intent of the major statutes providing the present legal basis for the library function in New Jersey.

Table I-1

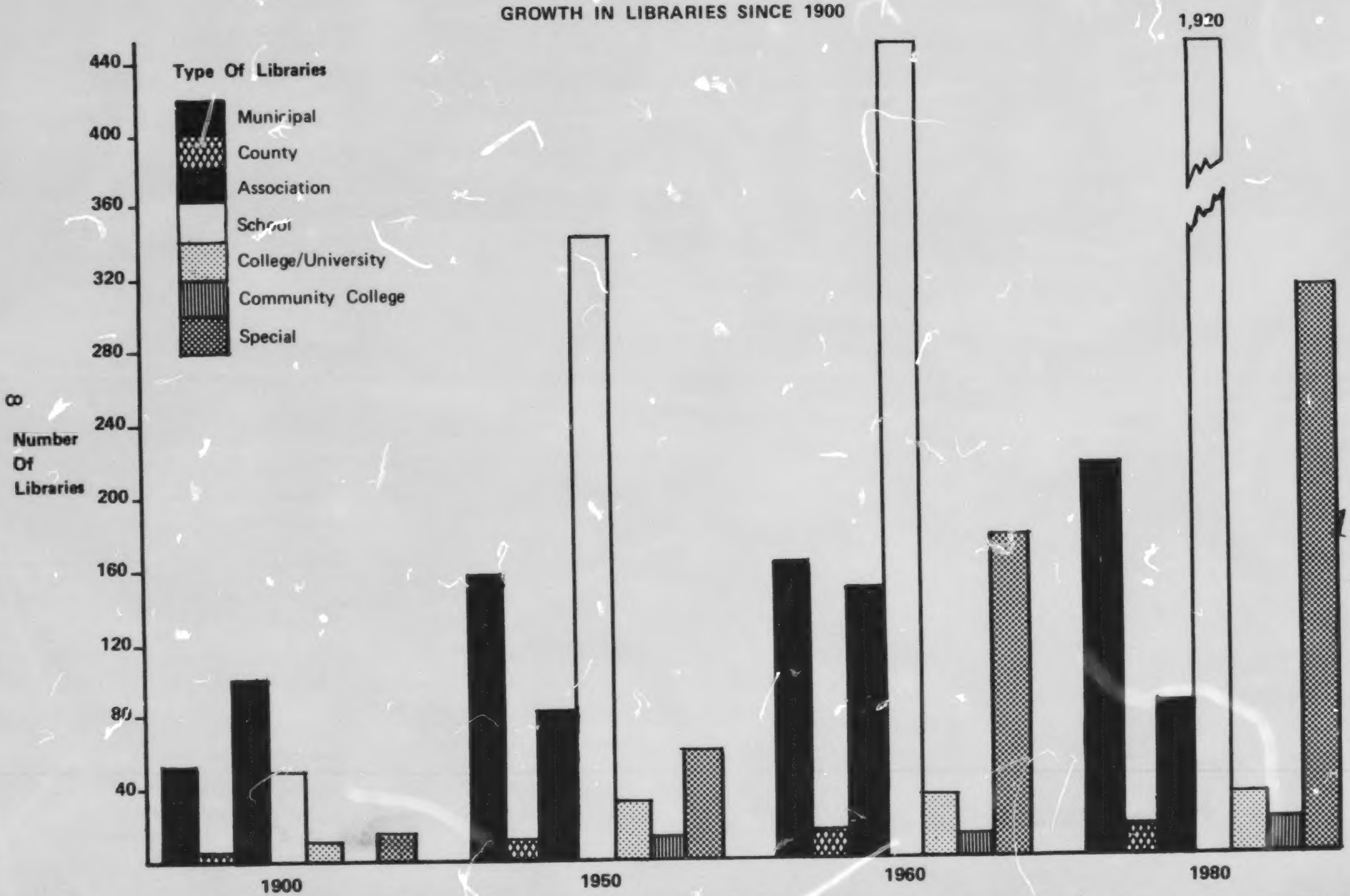
THE LEGAL BASIS FOR LIBRARIES

Category	Citation	Description
State Library	N.J.S.A. 18A:73-26 *et seq.*	Statutes providing for an advisory council, State librarian, and their duties. Major responsibilities include coordinating a statewide system of libraries, administering State and federal programs for the development of New Jersey libraries, and providing services to State government.
Municipal and County Libraries	N.J.S.A. 40:54-1 to 35. N.J.S.A. 40:33-1 to 14.	Statutes providing for the establishment, governance and funding of local public libraries in New Jersey.
Library Federations	N.J.S.A. 40:9A-1 to 4. N.J.A.C. 6:64-1.1*et seq.*	Statutes and regulations providing for the organization and services of library cooperatives among public libraries.
State Aid to Libraries	N.J.S.A. 18A:74-1 *et seq.* N.J.A.C. 6:68-1.1 *et seq.* to 6:68-3.1 *et seq.*	Statutes and regulations providing for the distribution of State aid, minimum Standards for public libraries, and the New Jersey Library Network.
Federal Aid to Libraries	N.J.A.C. 6:69-1.1 *et seq.* to 6:69-2.1 *et. seq.*	Regulations providing standards for the use of certain federal aid funds.
Librarians	N.J.S.A. 45:8A-1 to 4. N.J.A.C. 6:11-12.7 and 12.21.	Statutes and regulations providing for educational standards and State certification for professional librarians.

The State's efforts to help libraries *per se* were related to a number of other forces that also encouraged the establishment of local libraries, including the key factors of rapid urbanization and the desire for local autonomy. The creation of local school districts and the state system of higher education also combined to play an important part. Thus, most publicly-supported libraries evolved both as sources of community pride and as tools of education (see Chart I-1).

Chart I-1

GROWTH IN LIBRARIES SINCE 1900



As the chart suggests, a wide range of libraries has emerged in recent years. State government has played a central role in this pattern of library development both through the direct promotion of libraries and as a consequence of its broad program of public education. Generally, the State cannot easily disassociate itself from any public institution or service that it has helped to create. Such an action would not be in the public interest that helped to initiate a particular service in the first place. This kind of moral obligation on the part of the State also applies to libraries and the services they provide to citizens. **More than most other public functions, libraries, particularly at the local level, depend upon the State for continuing assistance and guidance.**

The Basic Dilemma

The conduct of library business is nearing an important crossroad. The decisions that are to be made could substantially alter the pattern of future library development in New Jersey. Yet the process of changing the course of development has proven to be a difficult one, as has been the selection of a proper course of action. Libraries in New Jersey are caught in the vise of mounting pressures to change the traditional methods of library development and the continuing inability to make any specific changes in these procedures. As a result, libraries look more than ever to State government for leadership, financial assistance and guidance during a period of impending change in the course of library development.

"Irresistible Forces". . .

Pressure for change in libraries' operations are significant and cannot be ignored. The primary factor affecting the nature of library development is clearly the rising costs of operation. Severe reduction in the purchasing power of the typical library budget has resulted in proportionately greater expenditures for necessary staff. Concomitantly, budget percentage allocated for materials to augment library collections, including books, has been decreased both by rising staff expenses and the dramatically higher market prices for such materials. All types of publicly-supported libraries are experiencing this cost squeeze in their basic service operations.

Rising costs and shrinking purchasing power are not unique to libraries; just about all public institutions and agencies face the same problems. However, libraries have been particularly hurt by the cost squeeze because of the traditionally low priority of their budget requests and increases. As a result, budgets have usually been tight and little cushion is available to absorb the effects of inflation. Moreover the situation confronting publicly-supported libraries is made worse by the recent enactment of the 'caps' legislation, limiting increases in property taxes. Thus the currently weak fiscal outlook for libraries can be expected to erode the services they provide unless some ways of encouraging additional financial support are forthcoming.

However, no amount of change, regardless of its approach or features, can ever truly solve the problem of rising costs. It is simply unrealistic to expect to reverse absolutely the trend of tighter financial affairs. Instead, there must be a recognition that, individually, most libraries will not be able to expand staffs significantly, increase spending for new materials or adopt expensive new services. In most instances, the amount of additional money necessary for such broad growth simply would not exist. Therefore the library community in New Jersey must lower its sights a little and develop proposals for change that more effectively utilize limited dollar resources.

Yet, there are other pressures that might be addressed aong with the basic problem of inadequate funding. Most current, and perhaps most important to the citizens of New Jersey, is the demand for better access to library resources. Obviously, the goal of improving access to library services is not new, but recently there has been a rise in public support to implement new programs that carry out this goal, such as extended borrower cards.

The concept of library access is also important as a way of dealing with the basic problem of inadequate funding. However, in this context, library access may have opposite connotations: it can be applied either to promote the sharing of library resources or to restrict their use; each can be justified as a means to offset budget problems. Clearly, whenever the availability of library resources is restricted, in the name of cutting costs, the general public is the loser.

Libraries that are publicly supported by tax dollars must act in the public interest. This means that library access, as a cost-cutting tool or means of sharing resources, can be no less than what it is at present. Indeed, a stronger effort is needed to expand access to the resources of other libraries, now that the purchasing power of individual library budgets is rapidly shrinking. **The State must act to support programs for improving access to the resources of all types of libraries, especially for those libraries receiving public tax support.** In this way, the sharing of resources will provide all citizens a more equal opportunity to receive adequate library services. At the same time it will avoid, as much as possible, the unnecessary duplication of staff and collections that would occur if every library pursued an independent course in providing adequate services.

Another pressure on library service is the limited ability of libraries to handle the explosive increase in both the amounts and types of informational and educational material being generated in this country and abroad. There is an ever larger stream of print materials, as well as films, slides, filmstrips, audio and video cassettes available from information producers and publishers. It is becoming physically and financially impossible for individual libraries to keep their existing collections up to date, let alone try to expand them. Often libraries handle this pressure by default and reduce the areas that are kept current. However, too great a reduction in the acquisition of materials, either new items or ongoing subscriptions, impairs the provision and quality of such services. Since most people are aware of and want the latest information, the absence of a better way to handle the growth in information products confronts libraries with a risk of losing their patrons and advocates. While full resolution of the information explosion issue is unrealistic, libraries do need to explore more active responses. Once again, a renewed commitment to the sharing of library resources is a vital first step. Since few libraries can afford to maintain self-sufficient collections, reliance upon the resources of other libraries can help to fill the gaps.

During the last few years, computer technology has been increasingly made available to the business of libraries. It has also been combined with telecommunication devices such as the telephone, teletype, and cable television. These new, electronic library technologies represent a pressure for change in that they act as a general catalyst to assist necessary changes elsewhere. The adoption of computer technology affects both individual libraries and the methods for library interaction, including resource sharing. Basically, computers alter the ways by which library materials are processed, organized and distributed, reducing the time and effort to operate the library, yet expanding the amounts of information the library can hold or locate for people.

Though technology is no panacea for rising costs or for other library problems, it nevertheless is an important tool that cannot be ignored. However, a number of hurdles must be crossed before computer technology becomes a common factor in most library operations in New Jersey. First of all, this type of potential development is not always compatible with existing library practices and would require, for example, the revision of several major State programs. Efforts are also needed to identify the successful existing computer applications in the State so that these operations can guide new development and serve as the base for a statewide approach, as well. By building upon successful applications of technology in the State, libraries will avoid costly mistakes, limit unnecessary duplication of equipment and assure enough compatibility among individual systems. **Overall, a consistent governmental policy for applying new technology to libraries is needed in the State.** In order to be effective, this policy should clearly identify the role of technology in supporting necessary change.

In summary, then, New Jersey's libraries are feeling pressure for change, requiring an adjustment of library development patterns, in at least five distinct areas:

PRESSURES FOR CHANGE

- Financial weakness among publicly-supported libraries.
- Demands for better access to library resources.
- Benefits from broad, statewide resource sharing.
- Declining capacity to handle the information explosion.
- Availability of applied technology for libraries.

These are common to most libraries, especially to those libraries that are primarily supported with public funds. Each of these pressures has grown to a

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level that demands a response by government. Without proper action, libraries will be in danger of failing to meet the demands for service because they were unable to acquire the modern tools to do so. This in turn could lead to many good libraries becoming dated, and thus incidental institutions. Of course, a few strong libraries of each type would remain viable, but a constant scramble for support would obviously weaken such libraries, as well. Everybody stands to lose in this case, especially the public, as past investments deteriorate and services disappear.

Such a bleak vision of the future of libraries need not become a reality. Clearly, governmental action, expecially at the State level, is needed to offset these pressures. New Jersey's libraries are being challenged by public demands for broad and timely services. At the very same time, they are also severely challenged by the lack of a real growth in financial support. Present budgets can only purchase less staff and materials than earlier ones, since funding increases do not offset inflationary costs. State intervention is needed to help meet the twin challenges of developing better services and generating the money to provide them. However, State leadership and action represent the second part of the answer to the basic library dilemma. **The key to the future of libraries in New Jersey lies first with the people that now support libraries and the professional librarians that run them.**

"Immovable Objects"

Government must be allowed to act whenever it needs to do so. The present governmental approach to library development in this state simply cannot meet the challenges before it. Developmental policies and programs at both the State and local levels do not readily accept the concept of necessary change. For the most part, the means and the will to change are missing on New Jersey's library scene today. Good intentions and new initiatives are whittled away by chronic shortcomings. **First, there is generally no mechanism in New Jersey library law to provide for an ongoing adjustment process.** At present, library statutes are very specific and therefore rigid in application. Many of the basic provisions are 10 to 30 years old and badly out of step with contemporary values and needs. **Second, there is no meaningful consensus among librarians in the State to advise government on major areas in need of change.** Librarians and their supporters at the local level are often divided in their positions on what and how changes are to be made in development practices. This results in conflicting proposals tha usually cancel each other out in debate within the fragmented library community. Consequently, attempts at State-level leadership are undermined by local conflicts, since support for any particular action is automatically limited and opposed at the same time. **The end-result of an outmoded statutory base and constant tug-of-war over policies is apparent. There is widespread stalemate among the various library and government interests that has defied many attempts at solution. Such internal resistance to the imperatives of forging a consensus on new policies has produced a crisis of drift — slow in its pace but destructive in its wake. It is resulting in a gradual**

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erosion of the long-held belief in the viability of the library as an essential institution. Without some remedial action in the near future, the likelihood of a permanent loss of position and support is every greater. Following is a list of significant factors which stalemate library development, including the key shortcomings discussed earlier.

KEY FACTORS

- Lack of a common ground for change among librarians and proponents of libraries.
- Outdated and inflexible statutory base for libraries.

UNDERLYING PROBLEMS

- Overlapping jurisdiction for libraries at the State level.

  Overlapping jurisdiction for libraries at the State level.
- Many years of open-ended library development.

  Shift in population and ratable bases away from older, established libraries.
- Inability of library funding mechanisms to provide needed revenue growth.
- Weaknesses in State programs for interlibrary cooperation.
- Limitations in, and conflicts among, federal policies and programs.

Thus, the present library dilemma is a culmination of various factors and trends: the pattern of library development; the current types of libraries; the nature of library law; the particular form of library governance; and the intent of State and federal programs. All of these contribute to the present lack of unity and the resulting stalemate. To overcome this difficult, but far from hopeless situation, the first and most crucial step is to avoid divisiveness and address substantive problems at hand.

There are a number of important issues in each of the areas listed above. These issues have direct implications for the future course of publicly-supported libraries and the quality of library services they are to provide, as well. *The Development of Libraries and Networks* addresses all of these problems and issues save one. **The ability to agree to a common approach on the issues lies with the library professionals alone.** Potentially, the early resolution of these issues will yield significant and rewarding results that may not be possible at a later date. Without some general agreement however, these opportunities for improvement may not last in the charged and competitive atmosphere of current governmental affairs. Thus, in a real sense, librarians in New Jersey hold the collective future of the library institution in their own hands.

The Issues that Challenge New Jersey's Libraries

The State has a direct interest in a number of vital issues facing libraries today. This interest stems from the historical role of the State in greatly assisting the ongoing development of libraries. The issues themselves lie at the heart of the present debate on methods to improve the library function in New Jersey. Indeed, the proper role of the State in library development and the relationship of library matters to other state-level activites are key issues.

In order to deal with the pressures for change, there must be some settlement of genuine misgivings that arise when change is considered. Do the proposals for change address the problems of a weak financial picture, demands for better access and the information explosion? Do they produce the expected benefits of broader resource sharing and applied technology as well? What are the impacts on existing libraries? Is the ability to provide services made better or worse for each of the basic types of libraries? A list of evaluative questions can be endless. The actual manner in which particular questions are answered can only be the result of a meaningful State-local dialogue. A legitimate decision-making process should be a blend of State objectives and local service needs. This process will require a careful reading of both the issues and the facts necessary to support their resolution. Table I-2 outlines the issues that are considered in this report.

Table I-2

Intergovernmental Issues Regarding Libraries

FOSTERING BETTER LIBRARY SERVICES IN NEW JERSEY

- function of libraries in modern society.
- basis for a State interest in the library function.
- nature of library law: enablement versus mandation.
- finding ways to overcome the resistance to change.

GETTING ENOUGH MONEY

- State responsibility for providing aid to libraries.
- ability of public libraries to gain local tax support.
- shrinking financial incentives: millage rates and aids.

DELIVERING LOCAL LIBRARY SERICES IN THE REAL WORLD

- promoting access to nearby libraries.
- pressures on the provision of library services.
- relationship between library boards and governing bodies.
- evolution of county libraries.
- role of associations.

INVESTING IN ADEQUATE LIBRARY SERVICES

- stability for county library systems.
- tools available for local library development.

PROS AND CONS OF INTERLIBRARY COOPERATION

- State responsibility for a library network.
- structure and functions of the New Jersey Library Network.
- overall performance of the network process.
- distribution of aid in support of the network.
- role of public libraries in a network process.
- participation of non-public types of libraries in a network.
- joint interests in library planning and administration at the State level.
- new approaches to networking.

Obviously, these are fundamental questions to the library community. In many respects, the way these issues are addressed will largely determine the shape of the future for libraries in New Jersey. Clearly, a balanced approach toward understanding and resolving major library problems is necessary.

Certain specific objectives were set at the beginning of the study and are presented in the following table.

Table I-3

Objectives for the Library Study

(1) Clarify the role of the State and its principal library agency, the Division of the State Library, Archives and History;

(2) Improve the scope and effectiveness of aid programs for libraries;

(3) Provide for an equitable distribution of local tax revenues to public libraries;

(4) Encourage public library boards to be more responsive to local government;

(5) Design optional methods of organizing and financing public libraries on a county-wide basis;

(6) Increase opportunities to participate in a statewide network;

(7) Allow for a more flexible network structure and delivery of services;

(8) Expand the availability of network services to local libraries and residents of communities;

(9) Insure that all State-assisted library programs provide the maximum possible benefits to the municipal level; and finally

(10) Suggest necessary statutory corrections to be made in a general revision of existing library law.

Role of the Commission

This report by the *County and Municipal Government Study Commission* is based on a statewide study of libraries in New Jersey. As in its previous studies, its findings serve as a basis for addressing current and significant public issues. The principal goal of the library study is to improve the intergovernmental framework, legal and programmatic, for delivery of adequate library services throughout the State. The Commission seeks to accomplish this goal by recommending new or amended legislation related to a number of factors. Two of the principal elements considered are *first*, the legal responsibilities of state, county, and municipal governments to provide for library services to citizens; and *second*, the relationship and capacities among these levels of government to both support and manage the further development of libraries in New Jersey.

These objectives guided the entire research process for the study. The conclusions and recommendations presented at the end of this report reflect these basic aims. In addition, the Commission has tried to be even-handed in its activities during the course of the library study. Hence, there is no conscious bias toward favoring one type of library over the others in either the findings or recommendations. Rather, the Commission hopes to suggest changes in State law and regulation that create a better opportunity for all libraries to provide improved services to their constituents.

A number of procedural decisions were also made during the early portion of the study. First, it was necessary to develop a firm understanding of the nature of the library function, expecially in a governmental context. Chapter One, *Challenges Facing Libraries in New Jersey*, reviews the general background of all types of libraries in the State. The implications of past planning, legislative, and administrative actions are weighed against contemporary pressures on libraries to change some of their methods of operation. Hence, this chapter addresses the issues identified in Table I-3 from a broad State-level perspective. A second decision was to draw a distinction between matters concerning local libraries and those dealing with cooperative, i.e., networking activities among libraries. Thus, Chapter Two focuses on *Local Libraries* and Chapter Three is concerned with *Networking Among Libraries.* Accordingly, these chapters are arranged in terms of the library issues outlined earlier. Chapter Four, *Conclusions and Recommendations*, summarizes the Commission's findings and presents recommendations for legislative and administrative actions.

In summary, libraries are an essential part of the fabric of society, and as such are beset with major problems. Although principally economic in nature, these problems also include a demand for better access, an outmoded approach to resource sharing and declining capacity to handle the growth of informational and educational materials. A wide array of issues relating to proposals for meeting basic pressures for change has developed in recent years. The following chapters present the Commission's findings, conclusions and recommendations regarding the challenges facing libraries in New Jersey today. Ultimately, however, librarians, and those citizens supporting the library function, must deal with the problems and issues which shape the future for publicly-supported libraries in the State.

CHAPTER 2

LOCAL LIBRARIES

Section One: Getting Enough Money

Overview

Whenever people think of libraries, it is usually the public library that comes to mind. Municipal and county libraries (together considered public libraries) as well as the associations represent the first line of library service for most people in their respective communities. People who use libraries often go no further than their local libraries in acquiring such services. When they do seek out other types of libraries, it is usually to find detailed materials related to schoolwork or their jobs. Hence, public libraries are the foundation of most library service in New Jersey not related to more specialized needs. There is a strong reliance upon local libraries to provide a wide range of educational and informational services to the community. Therefore, the needs of public libraries should be carefully considered since they are the backbone of a basic service provided by local government.

State Responsibility to Aid Local Libraries

The biggest problem facing local public library officials is in obtaining sufficient funds to run the libraries. Expenditures for library services have increased greatly during the past ten years. For example, total statewide spending for public libraries in the year 1977 was 165 percent greater than the total figure for 1967. Much of this rise in total spending is due to the effects of inflation on the costs of staff and materials. At the same time, public libraries have also expanded their staff and purchases of materials in order to improve services. Thus, while the local library function is much less expensive than, for example, basic education and police protection, it is nevertheless a significant local expenditure. In 1978, the total income of public libraries and associations amounted to more than 65 million dollars on a statewide basis.

The burden of paying for local libraries has almost always been shared between the State and its municipalities. Indeed, the heart of the State aid package for libraries is per capita aid to *public* libraries (Chart II-1).

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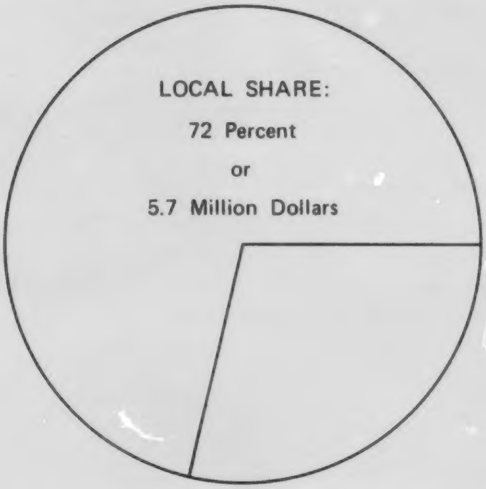
Chart II-1

LOCAL SHARE OF TOTAL STATE AID TO LIBRARIES
1979



(Resulting from *Per Capita Aid* to county, municipal association libraries)

This aid program began in 1968 and represents the latest in a series of State legislative actions that provide financial support for the growth and operation of local libraries.

A number of things indicate an ongoing State interest in helping to support local library services. Historically, the State has displayed a basic concern for the provision of local library services by enabling the establishment of local libraries. Since the late 1940s, the State has acknowledged the importance of library development by upgrading the capacities of its State library agency to encourage improvements in local services. Finally, statewide public library aid was initiated in 1959 to supplement the traditionally low level of local tax support for libraries. The present per capita aid program is a further refinement of this State interest in supporting adequate local library services. Most importantly, the current program acts as an incentive to increase local tax support for libraries. In addition, the State Library has set down minimum input standards for library staff and materials, which must be met in order to receive the State aid. The per capita aid program is the principal device used by the State Library to encourage improvements in public libraries, with the intent of promoting adequate local library services.

Based upon the history of involvement in local library development, five principles for both continuing and expanding the State's interest in public libraries are evident:

- **Providing the opportunity to establish libraries**
- **Promoting better local tax support**
- **Developing basic library resources in order to meet service needs**
- **Preserving the collections of long-standing, major public libraries**
- **Encouraging interlocal activities that improve service delivery**

These principles have been built into many existing library laws and State Library programs deriving from them. Having been a strong force in the establishment and growth of public libraries, the State, as a result, has incurred a moral obligation to maintain its interest in promoting better local library services. Clearly, municipalities cannot assume the entire financial burden for local libraries, especially during a time of local fiscal distress and property tax limitations.

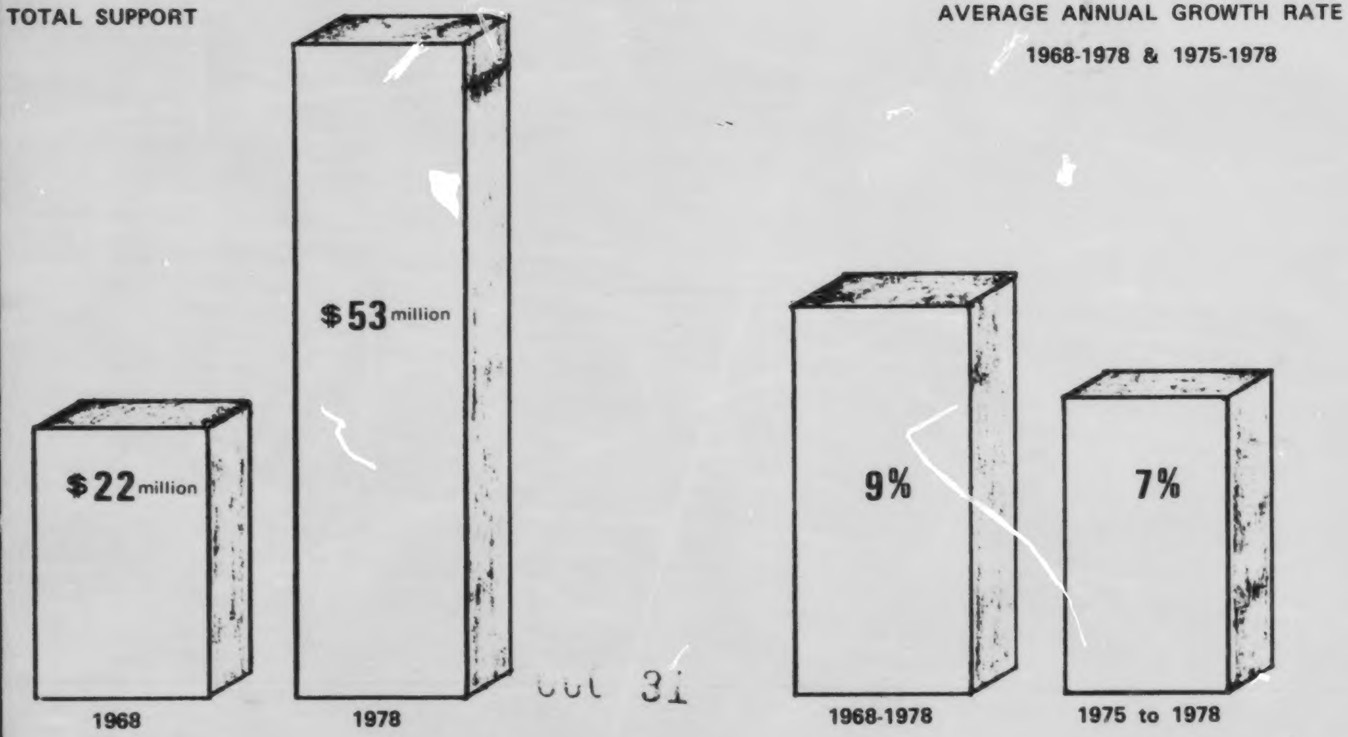
Ability of Public Libraries to Gain Local Tax Support

During the last ten years, between 1968 and 1978, public libraries have received a 9 percent average increase per year in local property tax support. While this record of growth may appear to be solid, a closer examination reveals major weakness in the overall record. First of all, not all public libraries realize this average figure in their new budgets — some are higher while many are lower. For example, in municipalities with resident populations smaller than 15,000, and in others over 50,000, the rate of growth in tax support is usually much less than 9 percent. In addition, 7 of the 14 county libraries now receive a smaller financial return from the available county tax base than they gained in 1972. Even more important is the fact that the problem of limited local growth in library revenues appears to be spreading and soon will affect most libraries.

The most important indicator of the growth in library revenues is the record of the last few years. Chart II-2, comparing the 10-year growth rate to the current rate, shows that the *current trend* for the growth rate in local tax support is below 7 percent on the average. This represents a 2 percent *decline* in recent average tax support, relative to the ten-year figure and is a major fiscal challenge to public libraries. At present, the national rate of price inflation is in excess of 10 percent. Many of the prices for various library materials, including books, have been rising at an even faster rate. The effect of this difference between the declining growth rate in tax support (less than 7 percent) and the rising costs of materials (over 10 percent) is impairing the continued delivery of quality library services. This cost squeeze is already beginning to reduce the acquisition of new materials. Since much of the demand for library services involves current information, libraries must either keep their collections up-to-date or not meet demands for service. Thus without some financial adjustments to offset the effect of inflation, public library services face the possibility of a serious decline in quality.

Chart II-2

TEN YEAR AND THREE YEAR GROWTH TRENDS OF LOCAL TAX SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC AND ASSOCIATION LIBRARIES



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Shrinking Financial Incentives: Millage Rates and Aids

For a long time there has been a recognition at the state level that public libraries must be assisted financially if they are to provide quality services. This recognition is based upon the knowledge that local tax support is often low, since other local functions, such as police and education, have priority at budget time. The State has responded in a number of ways to the chronic problem of limited local funds for libraries.

There are two chief mechanisms in library law to encourage greater public library funding. The first way is the mandation of a specified, minimum millage rate applied to the value of the local property tax base. No less than this amount of local tax support may be appropriated to a legally defined municipal or county public library. Furthermore, there are separate rates for county and municipal libraries (N.J.S.A. 40:33-9 and 40:54-8). The second method to encourage greater public library support is the State per capita aid program, which specifies a graduated scale of aid per local resident. There are five levels of aid in the present scale, with the level of aid received by a particular public library being set by the amount of local tax support for that library (N.J.S.A. 18A:74-3). While these laws have worked well in the past, both are now beginning to fail in their objective to promote better library funding.

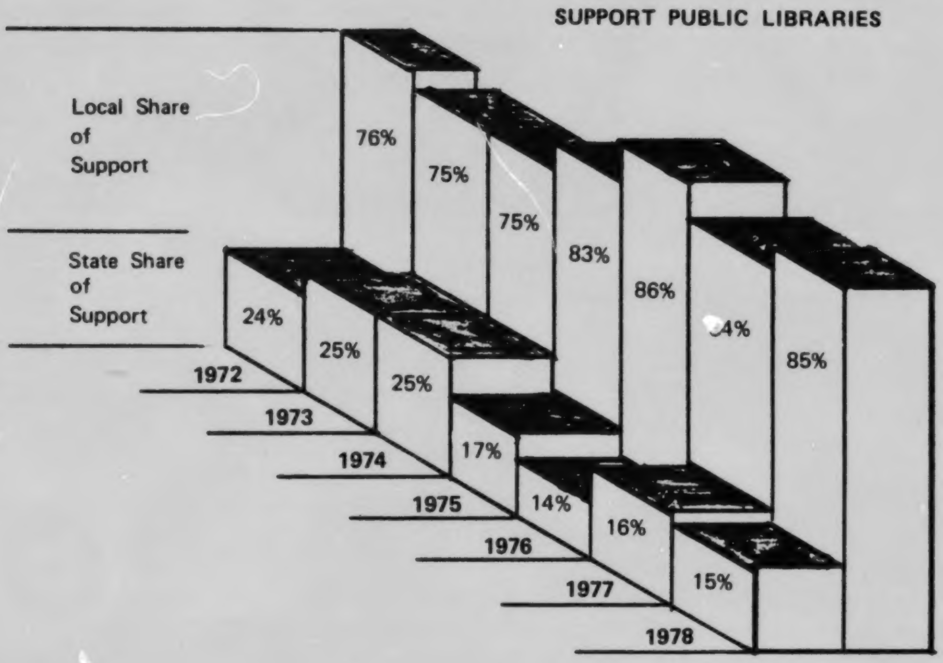
The statutory millage rates for local tax support were fixed many years ago. It was possible to set these rates and not affect the level of actual funding to the library because of two factors: first, since the law defines a *minimum* amount of tax support, municipalities can spend as much over the minimum as they believe is necessary. In addition, the total amount derived from the millage rate rises because the value of the property tax base is usually increasing over time.

The Commission has found that the assumptions contained in the statutes dealing with the value of the tax base need to be reconsidered. The law now provides that this tax base be the assessed valuation of property in the municipality. In practice, the effect of using the assessed valuation has led to an uneven application of the mandate, since the assessed valuations are not uniform among municipalities. Furthermore, the assessments often do not keep pace with inflated values, thus reducing the size of the expected minimum level of support. In turn, this causes many libraries to lose ground in terms of the purchasing power of their new budgets. **The Commission believes that the State needs to re-evaluate the statutory method for calculating minimum public library support.** The tax levy provisions in library law should neither act as barriers to greater levels of support nor cause uneven results when applied to various local tax bases.

In the foreseeable future, public libraries will do well to maintain the current growth rate of 5 to 7 percent in local tax support. A higher rate is not very likely given the legal limit on property taxes, cutbacks in federal grant programs, and the rise in costs for priority services. The burden of supporting county and municipal libraries has historically been a partnership between State and local government. However, the State's share of this burden has shrunk markedly in the last few years (See Chart II-3).

Chart II-3

STATE – LOCAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO SUPPORT PUBLIC LIBRARIES



Since 1975, State government has consistently contributed much less than the 25 percent average of earlier years. This reduction is occurring at a time of high inflation and declining growth in local support. Local government has generally assumed its responsibility as a prime supporter of public libraries. As a local function that is not mandated by the State, the principle burden *should* be assumed by those communities that want local library services, yet there is a limit to their capacity to do so. Clearly local government has reached that limit as evidenced by the current decline in greater tax support for libraries.

The Commission believes that one of the legislative intents of the State library aid law was to assume a substantial portion of local library support. For instance, a full authorization of the aid law upon its adoption in 1968 indicates that the state share would have been more than 20 percent of the total state and local support for libraries. By 1972, the State share had actually grown to around 25 percent (see Chart II-3). **Therefore, it is the opinion of the Commission that the aid law was indeed intended to provide for a 20 to 25 percent state share of the costs of public library services.** Since 1975, the problem has been one of *not* appropriating enough State monies to insure this share. Overall, local government budgets are restricted by law and their revenues are growing at a slower rate than State revenues. Greater State support is needed to offset the demonstrated limit on local ability to assume additional public library costs. It is time for the State to renew its role in the State-local partnership to support public libraries. Anything less than a resumption of this role will endanger the quality of the State's most frequently used library services.

A second problem area regarding the per capita aid program is somewhat more technical in nature. Earlier it was mentioned that the aid program acts as an incentive for greater local tax support for libraries. Obviously, in an era of rising costs, less growth in local support and declining percentages in State aid support, financial incentives are vital. The incentive mechanism in the library aid program is based upon a graduated scale of aid per resident served by the library. There are five rates to the existing scale ranging from $0.25 to $1.25 per capita. Higher rates are achieved according to the amount of municipal tax effort supporting the local library. At present, more than 135 public libraries and associations are at the top rate. The Commission views this fact as a fine record of achievement by municipalities in supporting their public libraries. It is evidence that the concept of the incentive mechanism is valid and also works well in practice.

Unfortunately, there is a price to pay for this success. Once the top level of aid is reached, there is no longer any incentive in the aid formula to increase the level of local tax support. Since as many as 135 communities are at the highest rate of aid there is a need to adjust the formula. Clearly, the more communities that reach the top rate of aid, the less an incentive mechanism remains in the aid program. As a result, **the Commission supports the idea that the formula should be adjusted in order to retain the effect of an incentive for higher local tax support.**

In summary, the total cost of public library services has risen dramatically in the last ten years. This increase in library expenditures is due especially to the effects of inflation but is also attributable in part to improvements in library service. State and local governments have shared the burden of library support in the past. However, the State share has been cut back since 1975. At this point, local government can no longer take up the slack of declining State assistance. In order to avoid a loss in the quality of public library services as library expenditures level off, three steps must be taken. *First,* the method of calculating the local tax levy for libraries should be adjusted to provide greater uniformity and to improve response to inflationary pressures. *Second,* the State must reassume the proportionate share of public library revenues that it provided prior to 1975. A return to a 20 to 25 percent State share of total public library support is equitable and necessary. *Finally,* the per capita aid program needs to be revised in a way that retains the incentive for better local tax support in future years. Without these actions, public libraries will surely succumb to the pressures of inflation and experience a severe decline in their effective budgets and services. The State has always provided significant help to public libraries in the past. In doing so it recognized the value of the primary service role of public libraries at the local level. The present situation requires that the State renew its commitment to help safeguard the quality of public library services.

Section Two: Delivering Local Library Services in the Real World

Overview

Many of the operational concerns of local libraries can be traced back to the basic problem of insufficient funding for libraries. Indeed, if somehow a great amount of additional money were to be made available, many operational difficulties would disappear. However, current events indicate that the hope for a big increase in library funding will not be fulfilled in the near future. All publicly-supported libraries will have to adjust to the realization that money is tight and will remain tight. Yet making do with less does not necessarily mean the end of the road for libraries. Rather, an era of relative limits to governmental action implies a new goal for libraries — the preservation of quality library services. As a result, libraries will become more concerned with *improvement* rather than with *expansion* of existing operations. In addition, libraries will be more involved in providing services jointly with other libraries since fewer can afford to be independent. Local libraries will also have to work more closely with elected officials in meeting community service needs in light of fiscal limitations and budget priorities.

The State, for its part, will be asked to provide the legal basis and financial assistance necessary to carry out this process of adjusting to new goals. In some cases, this will mean some additional State support to preserve existing library services and to offset the limitations in local support. In other instances, the State will be asked to make it possible for libraries to cooperate more effectively in pooling their resources.

A State program geared to the new realities facing libraries will primarily seek to make better use of existing assistance funds. It will also provide some additional support for needed program improvements in the overall State approach to library development. Finally, the modest expansion of State-level assistance will give the State Library sufficient capacity to continue to carry out its own statutory mandate. Overall, this will be a time of new initiatives and better service provision – a time inspired by a growing realization of the need to adjust the business of libraries and the determination to do something about it.

Promoting Access to Nearby Libraries

The promotion of access to library services is perhaps the basis for the entire State interest in library development. There are a number of indications that support this general observation. The evolution of State actions to enable and assist the development of public libraries points toward this intention as the primary State goal. Yet, efforts to expand access to library services have not been limited to encouraging *public library* development. Implicit in the development of the New Jersey system of higher education is the creation of *specialized* library services at the academic level. Rutgers University, the State colleges and local community colleges have all developed libraries, primarily with public funds. Like the public libraries, the academic institutions provide library services to members of their respective communities, generally students and faculty. It is much the same situation for local school libraries. With local district support, State Library encouragement and especially the federal grants program for education in the late 1960s, local school library services are commonplace today. Thus the primary service goal of the State regarding libraries is readily apparent. **Over the years, the State has encouraged and assisted in the widespread creation of various types of libraries. The result of these efforts has been the extension of general and specialized library services throughout New Jersey on a local basis — nearby services that are primarily geared to meet the needs of those individuals or families connected by occupation or residency to a particular library locale.**

This section is concerned solely with the capacity of *public* libraries to provide these "close at hand" services to community residents. The availability of convenient and quality library services is the chief service objective of all local library officials. There are at least four basic ways to achieve better community access to quality library services, namely to: (1) build a new library; (2) move an existing library; (3) restock an old one; or (4) obtain the services of a previously restricted library. The first two approaches, building a new library or moving an existing one, are often the most popular ones in municipalities. Usually this activity involves a smaller, *branch* library rather than the main, central library facility. There are a number of considerations involved in this kind of library development.

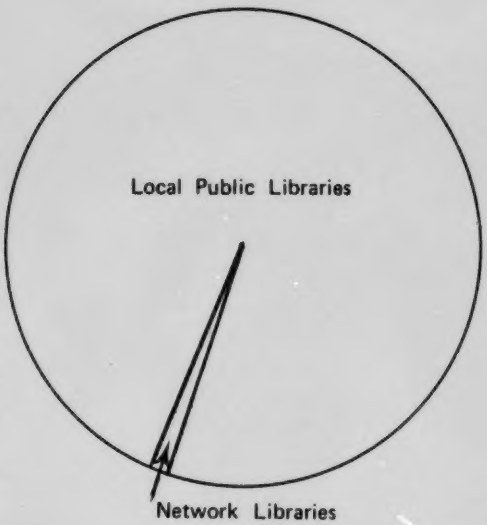
Community pressure is often brought to bear upon municipal and library officials to establish neighborhood libraries. These smaller libraries act as a source of group identification for area residents who are interested in improving their living environment. Such libraries serve as a focal point for many neighborhood activities, especially in regard to educational programs for local schoolchildren. When a municipality sets up a number of these smaller branch libraries, and links them to a central library facility, it is said to have a *decentralized* library system. Over the years, many larger, populous municipalities have built up such systems. This type of library development is common to older, urban communities.

The development of branch libraries is still a valid practice at present. This conclusion is supported in a 1976 study, funded by the New Jersey State Library and conducted by the prestigious Gallup Organization. The study found the evidence indicated in Chart II-4.

Chart II-4

TOTAL CIRCULATION
OF LIBRARY MATERIALS IN 1978

- Most people prefer small libraries within walking distance of home or office.
- The greatest demand is for limited resource libraries.
- Public libraries are often used for the borrowing of materials.
- Most loan requests are for either popular, or hobby-related, materials.



Hence, one of the best methods of providing nearby access to local library services is to establish branches of a main library facility. In addition, circulation statistics reflecting the lending of library materials seem to uphold the general conculsion that most library usage occurs at the community or local level.

State actions have supported the public's desire to distribute library services through numerous library outlets at the local level. This principle of local access to library services was set down early in the course of library law development. By the turn of this century, the State, seeing a need to provide library resources in unserved areas, began to encourage the establishment of community libraries and loaned them "traveling" collections of materials. Today, this concern is expressed as the promotion of equal access to library services for all New Jersey citizens.The State Library is the principal agency responsible for carrying out this objective.

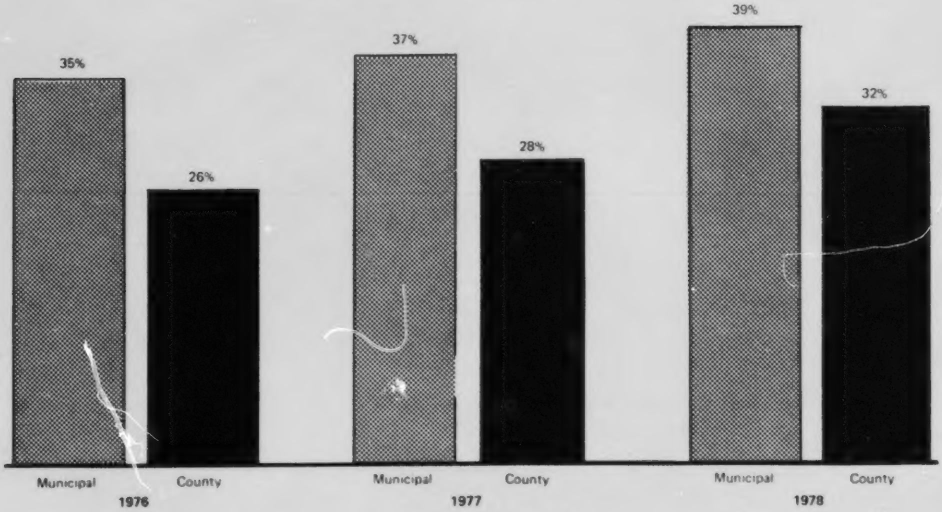
However, the Commission has observed a glaring contradiction in the State approach for achieving the equal access objective at the local level. To date, the State has been concerned only with improving access to services through branch outlets for county libraries. An aid program has existed since 1974 that is designed to encourage setting up branches of county libraries. The program is phased over a five-year period and allows incentive grants to county libraries for planning and stocking branches (see N.J.A.C. 6:68-2.17 to 2.22). There is no comparable program available to municipal libraries.

It is the Commission's opinion that the State's interest in promoting nearby access to library services ignores the existence of branch libraries at the municipal level. Two-thirds of the more than 120 identifiable branch libraries in New Jersey are outlets of municipal libraries. As underscored in Chart II-5, municipal library officials commit more of their total budgets to branches than do the county operations. In the past year, these municipal libraries allocated almost 40 percent of their budgets to branch outlets and over the past few years, their book allowances to branches were, on the average, 7 percent higher than those of county libraries. Based upon these facts, municipal branch libraries are at least as important as county branches in the delivery of nearby library services.

Chart II-5

PERCENT OF LIBRARY BUDGET ALLOCATED TO BRANCHES

COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL LIBRARIES



What is the basis for the State's unequal treatment of branch library development by county and municipal libraries? Generally, county libraries are as interested as municipal libraries in making services as directly accessible as possible to communities via branch outlets. However, the basic motivation to improve access to services is not quite the same. County libraries seek to set up branches in order to improve the stability of their overall county systems (details are discussed later in this chapter). The State Library has recognized this county need in establishing its aid program to encourage new county branches. However, a serious inequity has since developed about this type of branch library assistance. While the objective of county libraries is to establish branches and improve library stability, most often the municipal objective is to keep *existing* branches open. **The Commission believes, as a matter of equity and in recognition of the importance of branch libraries to municipalities, that the State assistance program should be expanded to include municipal libraries already having branch outlets.** Such aid would be provided on the basis of financial need. Towns that could qualify for aid suffer from weak tax bases and incur high costs in operating older, more extensive branch systems. This aid would act to help preserve the access to nearby library services by averting the closing of municipal branches in communities beset by financial problems. The Commission is aware of a number of urban area cases where this type of aid will be most helpful. The Commission also feels that, *in concept*, aid monies to maintain the operation of existing branch libraries could be extended to the county library branches, as well. However, in light of the healthier tax bases of the counties, the absence of any cases of county library hardship due to branch development, and the limitation of available funds, **the Commission feels that any new assistance should be reserved, at this time, for municipal libraries which are in danger of reducing services because of branch closings.**

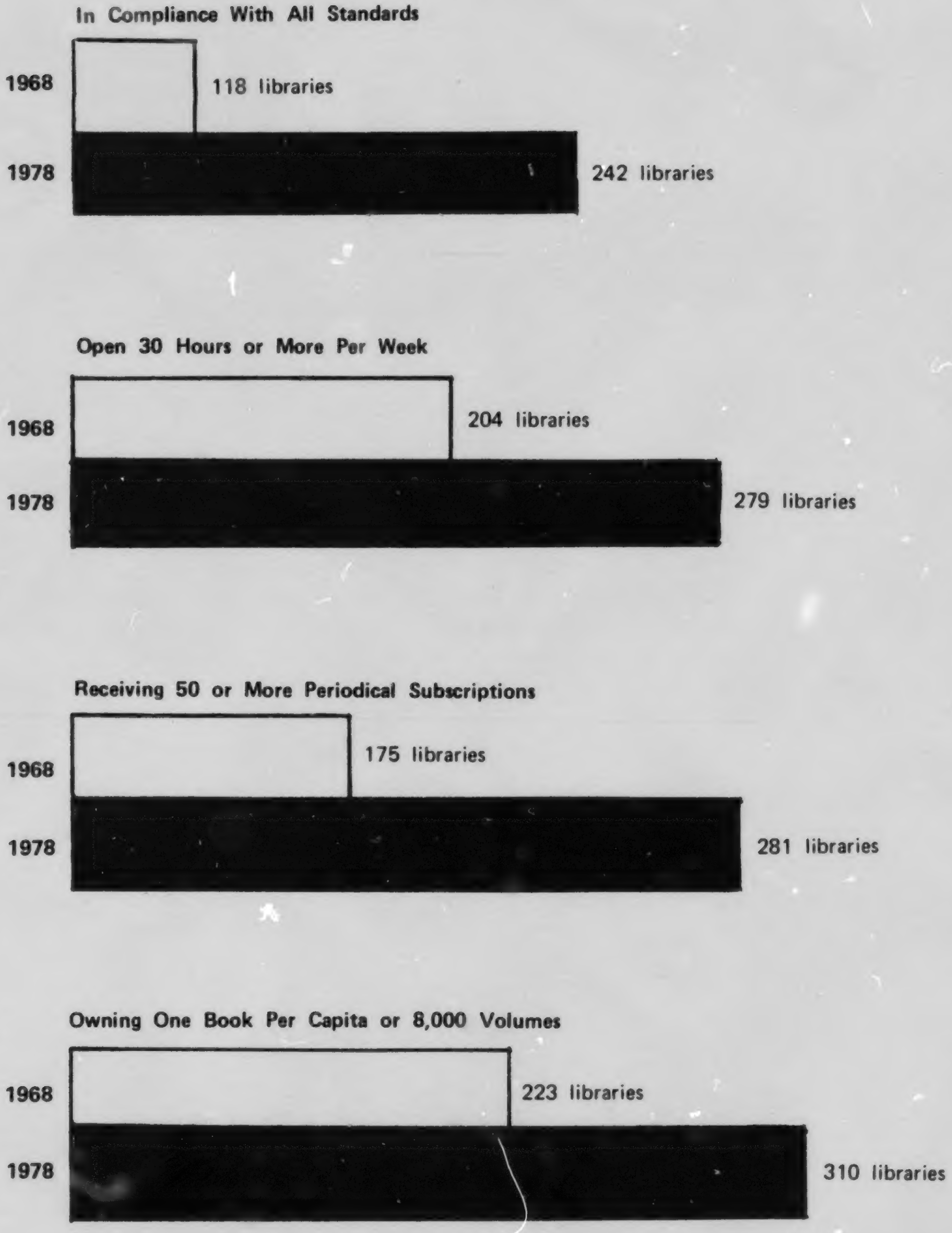
Pressures on the Provision of Library Services

The objective of providing access to local library services involves more than setting up neighborhood facilities. Once a facility becomes available, the main concern shifts to the actual delivery of quality services. Satisfactory services require, in turn, that there be an adequate supply of materials and staff. The need for a minimum of resources to provide quality services is true of both the main library facilities and branch outlets. The State Library has recognized the vital link between a critical level of resources and quality services and has written a number of regulations dealing with minimum levels of materials and staff for public libraries. These minimum levels set the amounts of library professionals, support staff, books, hours of operation, etc. required within various population ranges. These regulations are a condition for community entitlement to per capita aid for its local library (N.J.A.C. 6:68-1.1 *et seq.*). Overall, public libraries have been able to establish a fine record of achievement in regard to these aid regulations. As shown in Chart II-6, full compliance with all standards more than doubled between 1968 and 1978. Today, over 75 percent of all public libraries meet or exceed the standards for their respective service populations.

Chart II-6

PUBLIC LIBRARIES MEETING STATE AID STANDARDS

(N.J.S.A. 18A:74-1 et seq.)



The laudable accomplishment of local libraries meeting these standards may not, however, provide a sufficient guarantee of quality library services at the local level. First of all, these standards only apply to *resources* available in libraries to provide services and do not address the *services* actually performed on behalf of library patrons. The lack of criteria for quality services is not confined to New Jersey. Although the American Library Association and the New Jersey Library Association, among others, are making efforts to remedy this nationwide problem, there are no acceptable model standards of service performance available at present to the State Library. This issue requires resolution, since libraries are the type of public service agency that benefit from better guidelines for performance. **The Commission supports a joint effort between the State Library and local interest groups to begin the formulation of basic library service standards.**

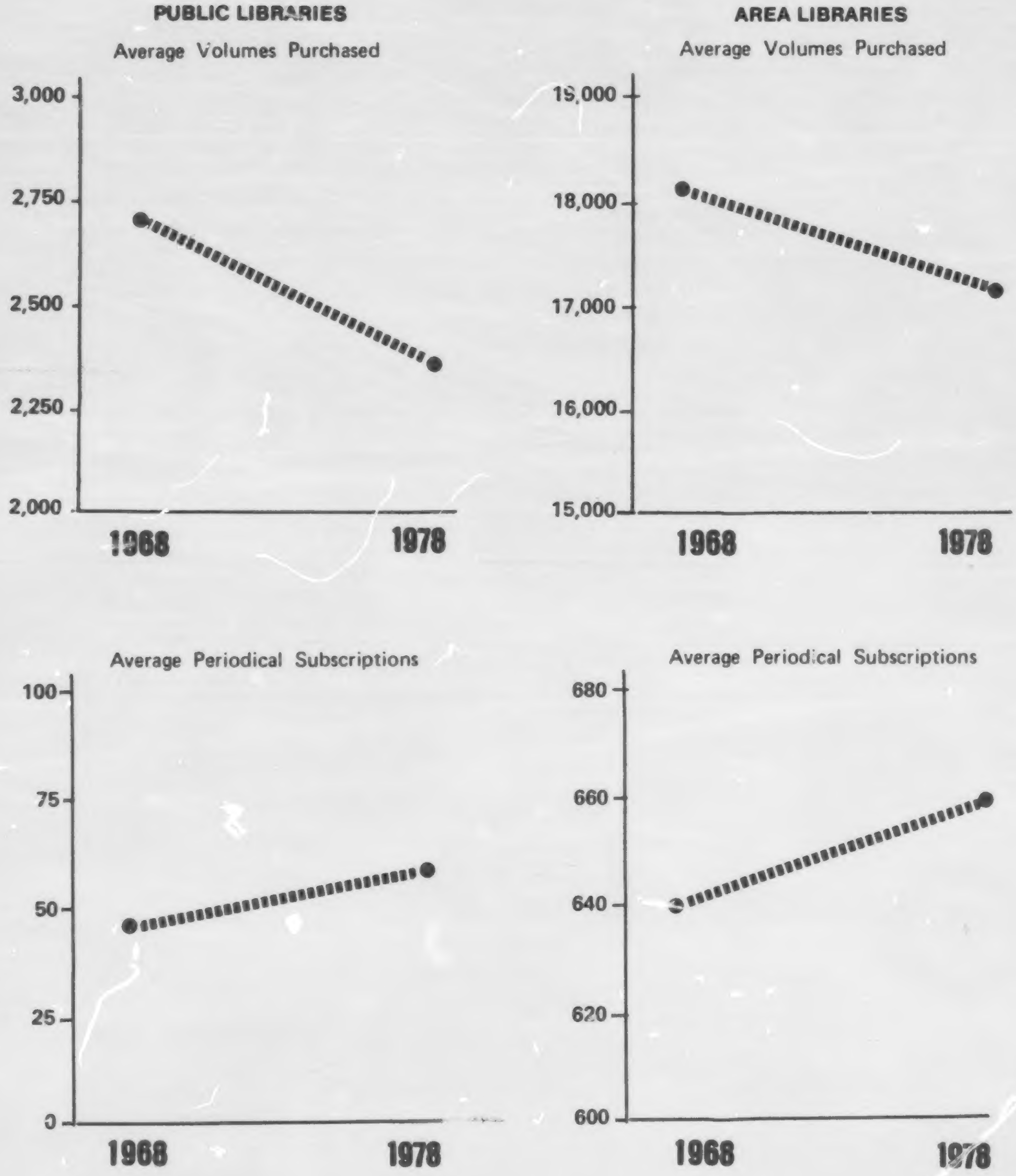
Due to the current lack of service standards, no *objective* inferences can be made directly on the quality of services, i.e., the adequacy of local library *outputs*. The closest approximations are the general circulation figures for library materials. Though a broad measure of library use, circulation statistics are presently the best available measure of services. They are also useful in that circulation is linked to the availability of library resources, e.g., the demand for certain books. However, a look at the latest circulation figures reveals a disturbing picture — in the last few years the growth curve for public library circulations of materials has flattened out. In part, this trend can be attributed to the slowing down of purchases of new materials, especially books.

Chart II-7 shows the situation for all public libraries and, separately, the larger public libraries (the so-called area libraries discussed in chapter three on networking). A comparison of the years 1968 and 1978 reveals a decline in new book purchases, especially for the larger libraries. Overall in the last few years, book acquisitions have declined an average of 10 percent per year. On the other hand, subscriptions to periodicals have improved slightly.

Chart II-7

TRENDS IN PURCHASE OF MATERIALS:

1968-1978



There are several meanings to the decline in new book purchases. All public libraries, on the average, are experiencing a decline in book acquisitions. This reduction is occurring at a time when publishing companies are continuing high levels of publication of new materials. Not all of these new publications can be acquired or are suitable for purchase, but the purchase of less library material in the face of its greater availability is not a good sign. A more telling indication of a major problem is the sharp drop in new books for the larger public libraries, where a reduction of a thousand volumes can be a serious matter. These libraries are usually considered as the strongest component in the public library group, since many smaller libraries rely on them as indepth, back-up sources of materials.

The importance of new library materials was verified by the Gallup Organization in 1976. They found that, in New Jersey as elsewhere, the basic services —book-borrowing, reading, reference — are the most heavily used local library services. Such services usually rely heavily on up-to-date information since a good deal of local user demand relates to popular or current topics. Since the ongoing purchase of new library materials is the core of library services, the current trend toward fewer new purchases can, in time, mean a lowering of library service levels.

The Commission is concerned about the near-term service implications of the trend toward reduced acquisition of library materials. The use of minimum acquisition standards for materials can do little if anything to offset this trend and inflated prices for library materials can only make matters worse. In order to help safeguard the provision of quality local library services, **the Commission believes that the trend toward less new material must be stopped, if not reversed.** As before, this new library initiative should be based upon a State-local partnership. Generally, there needs to be a greater emphasis upon promoting investment in the basic services of book-borrowing, reading and reference. This will probably involve a new program to increase the purchase of materials. More specifically, the State needs to initiate a voluntary method of developing local library collections. A program of this sort can also act as a way to improve the measurement of services beyond mere circulation statistics. In short, new efforts are needed to stimulate the purchase of materials that improve local services.

Pressures on the provision of library services are also felt in local *school* libraries. Broadly stated, school libraries find it increasingly more difficult to provide quality services. School libraries have not had the benefit of direct State aid for many years and in terms of local support, the recent financial picture is poor as well. In the school years of 1973/74 and 1974/75, school library expenditures grew an average of 8 percent per year. However, during the following two years, the growth in library spending dropped to less than 1 percent and remains about the same, at present.

If the negative impact of inflation on public libraries (described earlier in this report) is serious, the poor funding record for school libraries represents a potentially critical situation. It is made worse by two special characteristics of school libraries: first, the paid staff of the typical school library is usually small in number, often no more than a single librarian and a clerk/typist; and, second, a major share of library expenses are usually costly equipment such as projectors, tape decks, video devices, etc. With small staffs, expensive media equipment, and ongoing maintenance of book collections, there is virtually no flexibility in the typical school library budget. Thus, the lack of any real budget growth, in the face of strong price inflation, has created the current, dire situation and requires extraordinary efforts to continue the provision of adequate services to students.

While school libraries are under intense fiscal pressures, their problems in delivering quality services involve more than a lack of funding. For practical reasons, school libraries, unlike public libraries, have not been visible operations, and are not usually identified as a separate function in school districts. Moreover, school libraries normally are not accorded a priority in local school budgets set by district boards of education.

In recent years the change from a school library format to the media center concept has upgraded the image of these libraries. This concept, whereby the library acts as a learning center for the school, is a broader and more integrated approach to library services. As a result, school media centers are more actively involved in the educational process. Hence, a number of school libraries are in the midst of an ambitious service development program. In a growing number of districts, especially regional ones, the libraries have become prominent features of the overall curriculum.

In a real sense, school libraries are actively pursuing the principles set down in the Public School Education Act of 1975, more commonly known as the "thorough and efficient" law (N.J.S.A. 18A:78-1 *et seq.*). The media center approach is viewed by school libraries as an essential part of the working of this law. The future success of their efforts will require adequate financial support that, in turn, is based upon a clear State interest in promoting school libraries.

The traditional role of the State Library in assisting school libraries does not fit well within the context of recent federal and State actions. Federal aid has been diluted in the last few years as the school aid program began to allow a wider use of funds (P.L. 93-380:Title IV-B, as amended). Another consequence of the shift in federal aid philosophy occurred at the State level. At present, the State Library no longer administers the federal aid program. Instead, it has been made an internal management function in the Department of Education. In addition, the major State statute covering school districts (Public School Education Act of 1975) does not specify a functional role for the State Library regarding media centers. Finally, the regulations dealing with the 'thorough and efficient" educational process are ambiguous as to the duties and responsibilities of school media centers (N.J.A.C. 6:68-3.5.).

The Commission views this situation as a serious erosion of the leadership role of the State Library in the further development of school

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library services. The State Library has a primary duty in law to advise and coordinate the development of all publicly-supported libraries in New Jersey, including school libraries. While it has an administrative capacity to do so regarding public libraries, it has none for school libraries. Essentially, State Library staff can only act as an *ad hoc* consulting service to school libraries on a purely voluntary basis. Thus, concerns about school library funding, service development, and a proper role in the educational process cannot be adequately addressed, particularly on a statewide basis. Essentially, the issue concerning school libraries is perhaps a most fundamental one: namely, establishing a firm basis in law and regulation for both school library services and a State Library program of assistance. **The Commission supports a more clearly defined mission in State law for the State Library regarding the development of school media centers in school districts. This action should be tied to the "thorough and efficient" education approval process administered by the Department of Education (N.J.A.C. 6:8-1.1** ***et seq.*****)**

Relationships Between Library Boards and Governing Bodies

There are a number of issues to consider in reviewing the delivery of local library services. Earlier in this chapter funding, access and resource problems were discussed in regard to providing quality services. The last general area to consider is the governance aspect of public library operations. It can be said that public libraries are a peculiar form of local service agency. Judgements concerning the steps, both leading to the provision of library services and their actual delivery to local residents are basically made within the library operation. There is little, if any, control or oversight of daily library activities made by elected officials or their administrators. Historically, public libraries have evolved in similar fashion to public school districts — as discrete functions minimally influenced by local governments. Hence, public libraries are formed, and run, principally as autonomous corporate bodies, in the legal sense of the term. However, at the same time, they are dependent on the officials of a municipality or county for most of their financial support and for certain approvals regarding new capital construction and appointments.

Public libraries are formally governed by a board of trustees (in the case of municipal libraries) or commissioners (in the case of county libraries). The board members have the overall decision-making responsibility for their particular library including preparation of an operating budget and hiring of personnel. The library director, also hired by the board, is the day-to-day manager of the library.

The details of library board powers and responsibilities are prescribed in the State statutes of New Jersey. Generally, library laws were made and revised over a long period beginning in 1879. Today, many library statutes bear a strong resemblance to the original enactments. The laws dealing with public libraries are identified mainly with a particular type of public library or type of cooperative activity among such libraries. The general categories of public library law are presented in Table II-1. In addition, there are separate laws dealing with the State Library, library aid, library employees, and various miscellaneous acts involving libraries. **The Commission reviewed all library law and regulation and concluded that while a general revision of these statutes may be advisable, the laws concerning public libraries are in need of specific amendment.**

The review of library laws and other research activities revealed a number of problems with library boards. The most glaring one concerns the relationship between library boards and local governing bodies at the municipal level. The links provided in law between boards of trustees and elected municipal officials have been a constant source of confusion and dissension. The laws appear to be unclear as to the conditions of interaction when either approval or consultation with elected officials is necessary before board action. This ambiguity is mainly evident whenever a statutory reference is made to the "mayor or other chief executive officer." Such language has led to problems of interpretation because of the variety of municipal forms in New Jersey. Depending upon the form of local government, the term "chief executive officer" can mean various officials. This is a key problem since the mayor or other chief executive officer is by law a full member of the trustee board and must share in basic policy-making for the library.

Table II-1

LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Library Type	Description	Remark
Municipal N.J.S.A. 40:54-1 to 40:54-29.2	Permissive law enabling the establishment of a "free public library" in a municipality. Provisions include procedures for establishment, minimum property tax levy, appointment and powers of library trustees, administration of revenues and facilities.	Free public library statutes originated in 1879. While these statutes have been revised, amended, and supplemented over the years, many current provisions bear a strong resemblance to the original enactments.
County N.J.S.A. 40:33-1 to 40:33-13.2b and 40:33-15 to 40:33-23.	Law authorizing establishment of a "free county library" upon passage of a county referendum to do so. Provisions include referendum procedures, membership by municipalities without free public libraries, special conditions for establishment in certain counties, minimum property tax levy, appointment and powers of library commissioners, administration of revenues and facilities.	Free county library statutes originated in 1920. Again, current provisions are very similar to the original enactment. Sections 40:33-15 to 40:33-23 are special provisions for county library funding and municipal withdrawal of membership in Morris County.
Joint N.J.S.A. 40:54-29.3 to 40:54-29.26.	Permissive law enabling the establishment of a "joint free public library" by 2 or more municipalities. Provisions include procedures for establishment, amendment of jointure agreement, appointment and powers of library trustees, determination of revenues and facilities, discontinuance.	This statute was adopted in 1959. It is modeled after the free public library law but avoids some of the ambiguities in the earlier enactment. There are 5 joint libraries in New Jersey.
Association N.J.S.A. 15:6-1 to 15:6-3 and 40:54-35.	Law respecting corporations not for pecuniary profit that are established under N.J.S.A. 15:1-1 *et seq.* Provisions include enabling the acquisition of property for library purposes in accordance with articles of incorporation and enabling appropriation of municipal funds to a library corporation.	Private, non-profit library corporations can be traced back to colonial times. These associations do not necessarily operate under the provisions of public library statutes.
Regional N.J.S.A. 40:33-13.3 to 40:33-13.18.	Permissive law enabling the establishment of a regional library among 2 or more counties. Provisions include procedures for establishment by resolution, appointment and powers of library trustees, determination of property tax levy, and withdrawal.	This statute was enacted in 1962. It has not been utilized by any group of counties in New Jersey.

A second problem area involving trustee boards concerns the handling and disbursal of library funds. The Commission has found that there is no uniform method among trustee boards to account for either local tax funds or State aid monies. Roughly one-half of the boards have sole control over financial record-keeping activities. The remainder have transferred some or all of the financial management of funds, liabilities, and balances to municipal government. The lack of specific accounting procedure in library law is creating serious difficulties. Tensions are increasing among some local officials and their boards about the absence of clear fiscal accountability. The number of instances of mismanagement of library finances, including large over-expenditures, is rising as well. **Local officials need to have an effective voice in financial matters of all local functions in these times of high inflation, budget limitations, and taxpayer demands for accountability.**

At the same time, this lack of uniform accounting of library funds has also hindered activities at the State level. The State Library is required to administer a number of its public library programs on the basis of financial need. In addition, it must monitor instances where library boards have saved State per capita aid for future purposes. Both of these activities are difficult to carry out in the absence of uniform financial information about public libraries.

Two final aspects of library governance that deserve immediate attention are the composition of county library boards and the absence of a quorum requirement before passage of board resolutions. In regard to the county boards, the Commission has found a number of cases where the present board does not reflect the geographic area serviced by the county library. This is due chiefly to the small size of the existing boards, a shortcoming which can, and should, be corrected by statutory amendment. A quorum requirement, on the other hand, is a matter of good parliamentary procedure and better accountability to local residents, and should be handled in the respective board's by-laws.

The Commission believes that, in light of these considerations, the statutes dealing with library boards are in need of revision. The ambiguity in these early laws does not fit well in the context of modern municipal and county management of services. It must be stressed, however, that as a result of necessary revisions in these laws, library boards should retain an essential autonomy of operation. This independence should apply to the internal affairs of staff and services. Public libraries must remain free from unwarranted influence or pressures in their role as educational institutions. **The Commission's primary concern, in the area of public library governance, is that local governments have the ability to participate in library affairs where such participation is already specified by law.** Areas of joint decision-making, involving local tax appropriations and other actions with long-term implications to taxpayers, must be clearly expressed in statutes dealing with library boards and local government.

Evolution of County Libraries

No one type of library seems to have undergone more of a change in emphasis since its inception than the county library. The advent of county libraries began with the formation of a common State-local interest in providing library services. These efforts to improve *local* library services began with the creation of the Public Library Commission, a forerunner of the State Library. This agency was primarily responsible for promoting access to local library services during the early part of this century. For years, this commission had been providing library services to communities without libraries through its traveling library program. However, two conditions surfaced that caused the Public Library Commission to seek another way of extending local library services. First, the process of establishing municipal libraries was especially slow in rural and undeveloped areas of the State. In addition, the traveling library program was very limited in the types and amounts of services it could provide to people. At the same time, many communities began to express a need for school library services. A survey conducted by the Public Library Commission revealed that, in a number of counties, many schools had no libraries of their own and few general circulation books for schoolchildren. These conditions prompted the commission to seek a new way to provide library services.Thus, the county library plan emerged from the dual need to improve the traveling library plan and provide direct library services to public schools.

Generally, the present version of the county library law, originally enacted in 1920, follows the provisions in municipal library law. The evolving pattern of county library services has followed suit. Most county libraries have grown to become, at present, large-scale public libraries, offering a wide range of services.

Viewed in a historical context, the present level of county library development shows both change and continuity. On the one hand, county libraries now serve rural areas by using bookmobiles and storefront "stations" instead of the old-style traveling libraries. Services to schools continue but are adjusted in recognition of school media programs. In addition, though, most county libraries have developed into strong, full-service libraries; a number have improved access to services by setting up branches; and many carry out a major role in the statewide library network. The mix of old and new service roles makes the county library unusual, in a sense, and has led to certain operational problems.

The difficulties that county libraries face in providing quality services are not usually apparent to most people. In order to appreciate these problems, it is first necessary to understand the nature of county libraries. State law requires all communities *not* having municipal libraries (also defined in law) to support a county library, if one has been established by the county freeholders. These municipalities are called *members* of the county library system. The remaining communities are said to be *exempt* from supporting the county library, since they have municipal libraries. However, towns that *do* have municipal libraries may voluntarily support an existing county library and give up their exemptions. Thus, the existence of a county library creates automatically two separate groups — member communities, both required and voluntary, and the exempt municipalities. This situation can change over time, since municipalities are allowed by law to change their membership status at will. Any member community can become exempt by setting up a municipal library while exempt municipalities can move in and out of the county library system in any given year. Obviously, changes in county library membership affect both the overall property tax base supporting the library and the extent of its services.

Another aspect of county libraries is the composition of their "systems." Each system is really a collection of several types of libraries, varying from county to county, and includes a number of possible elements:

- A *Central Facility* In One Municipality.
- *Branches* In One or More Member Municipalities.
- *Stations* In One or More Member Municipalities.
- *Association Libraries* In One or More Member Municipalities.
- *Free Public Libraries* In One or More Member Municipalities.
- Municipalities With No Library Outlet.

Service coordination within each system will tend to follow the structure of the system. For example: branches are tied more closely to the central library than free public libraries or associations; storefront stations and associations often have limited hours of operation; some county libraries have many branches while others have none. Hence, the structure of a county library can be complex and will tend to influence the provision of services.

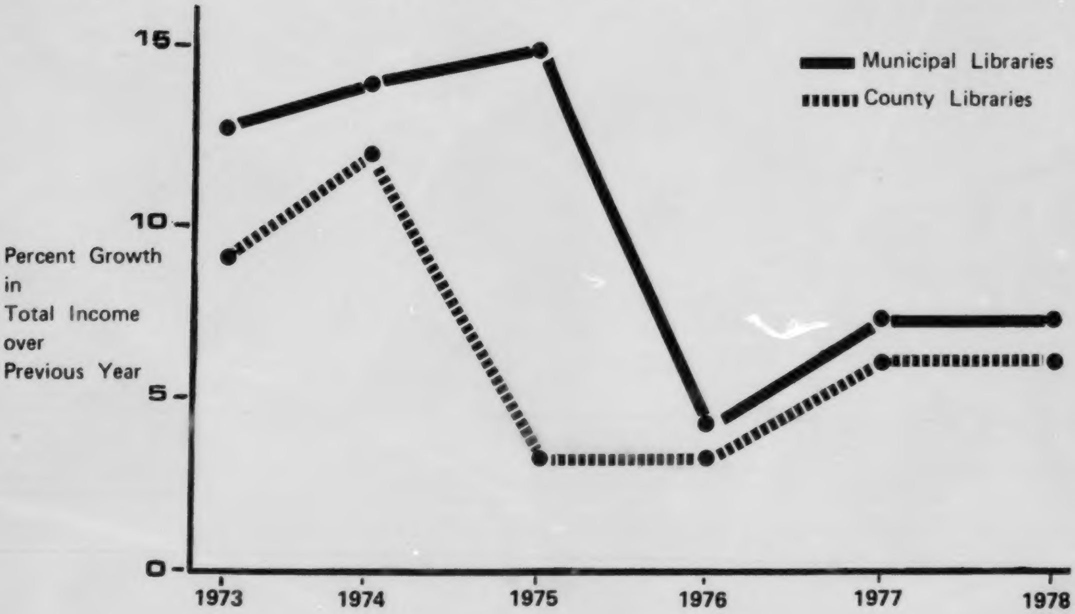
Overall, the service roles of county libraries are influenced by three basic factors: (1) the history of rural and school services; (2) the composition of the library system; and (3) the State Library. The State has designated 11 of the 14 county libraries to perform regional library services on its behalf. These services are intended to augment the services of smaller libraries by providing additional access to the greater resources of the county library. Thus, most county libraries act as *back-up* service centers to all other libraries in their respective regions. Such services are available to both member *and* exempt communities of the county library system itself.

The unusual nature of county libraries — complex structures and conflicting responsibilities — is rooted in library law. The original county law was intended to be optional and flexible, and, as a result, no two county libraries are quite the same. However, several general observations about county libraries provide a context for addressing their inherent problems of structure and role. Actually, the overall picture of county libraries is a healthy one, especially during the past ten years. Between the years 1968 and 1978, county library resources have grown at a faster rate, on the average, than have public library resources and the same applies to circulation of library materials. Moreover, as shown in Chart II-8, the trend in revenue growth for municipal and county libraries is about the same. **These facts support the Commission's conclu-**

sion that county libraries are viable and important local service institutions, equivalent to municipal libraries in basic purpose and function — the provision of traditional, nearby library services. The Commission also concludes that, based on demonstrated needs, county libraries are here to stay.

Chart II-8

TRENDS IN LIBRARY REVENUE GROWTH



At the same time, the peculiar nature of county libraries has also generated problems. It has the capacity to create various tensions whenever towns move to become exempt from the county library and invites dissension among local libraries and librarians in their efforts to balance conflicting service roles. These problems, although not always apparent to persons outside of the library environment, have existed for many years wherever there are county libraries and have seriously impeded library development in New Jersey. **The Commission believes that county libraries will always need to face the possibility of adjustment in the delivery of local and regional services.** Therefore it is the responsibility of the State to give county libraries, through the freeholder boards establishing them, the statutory ability to adjust their structures and services when it is necessary to do so.

Role of Associations

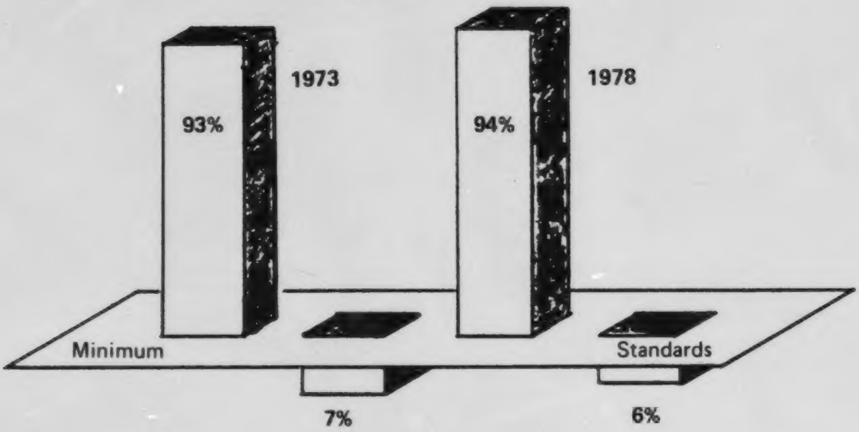
Associations are the oldest form of organized library service in New Jersey, dating from colonial times. As noted earlier, associations are organized under New Jersey law as private, nonprofit corporations. They were formed most often as a result of private citizens' concerns for local library services. Usually they were launched with a few trusts, some donations, and long-term loans of private book collections. Later, town officials started to provide tax funds to help support the associations in exchange for library services to the entire community. Hence, associations are considered a third type of local library along with county and municipal free public libraries.

The private nature, small size, and low level of public tax support together act to limit the service development of most associations. Indeed over 40 percent of them currently have difficulty providing modest local library services. This lack of service capacity can best be viewed in the context of the resource standards for State per capita aid.As indicated in Chart II-9, there has been very little improvement in the performance of associations in meeting these standards, for the period 1973 through 1978. As of the latest year shown, 43 percent of all associations were still failing to meet all of the minimum standards for staff, materials, etc. In contrast, the performance of municipal libraries has remained consistently high. On the basis of minimum resource standards, municipal libraries, as a group, have a greater capacity to provide adequate local library services.

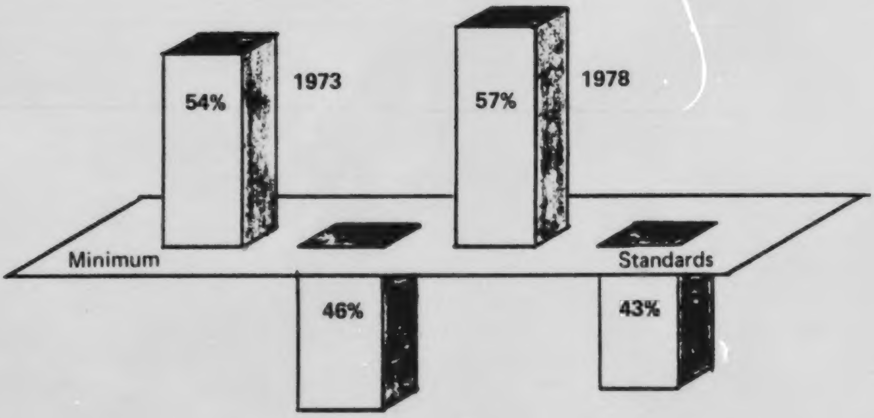
Chart II-9

ACHIEVEMENT OF MINIMUM STANDARDS BY MUNICIPAL AND ASSOCIATION LIBRARIES

Municipal Libraries



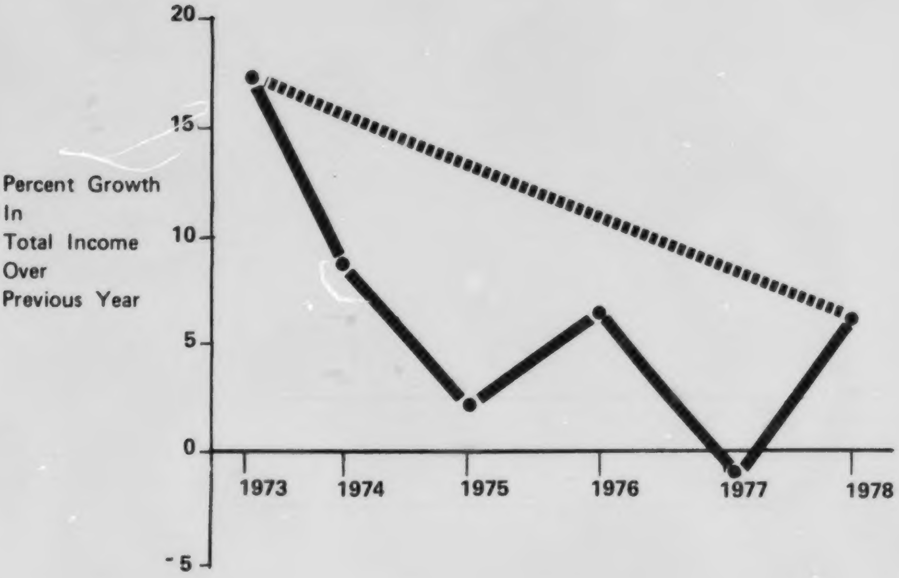
Association Libraries



The problems of association development lie chiefly in the absence of the legal safeguards that guide municipal libraries. Since they are not free public libraries as defined by law, associations do not have to abide by the provisions of municipal library law. Municipalities that support associations are likewise free to accept or ignore these provisions. This situation is most apparent in the trend of public tax support for associations (see Chart II-10).

Chart II-10

TREND OF ASSOCIATION LIBRARY FUNDING

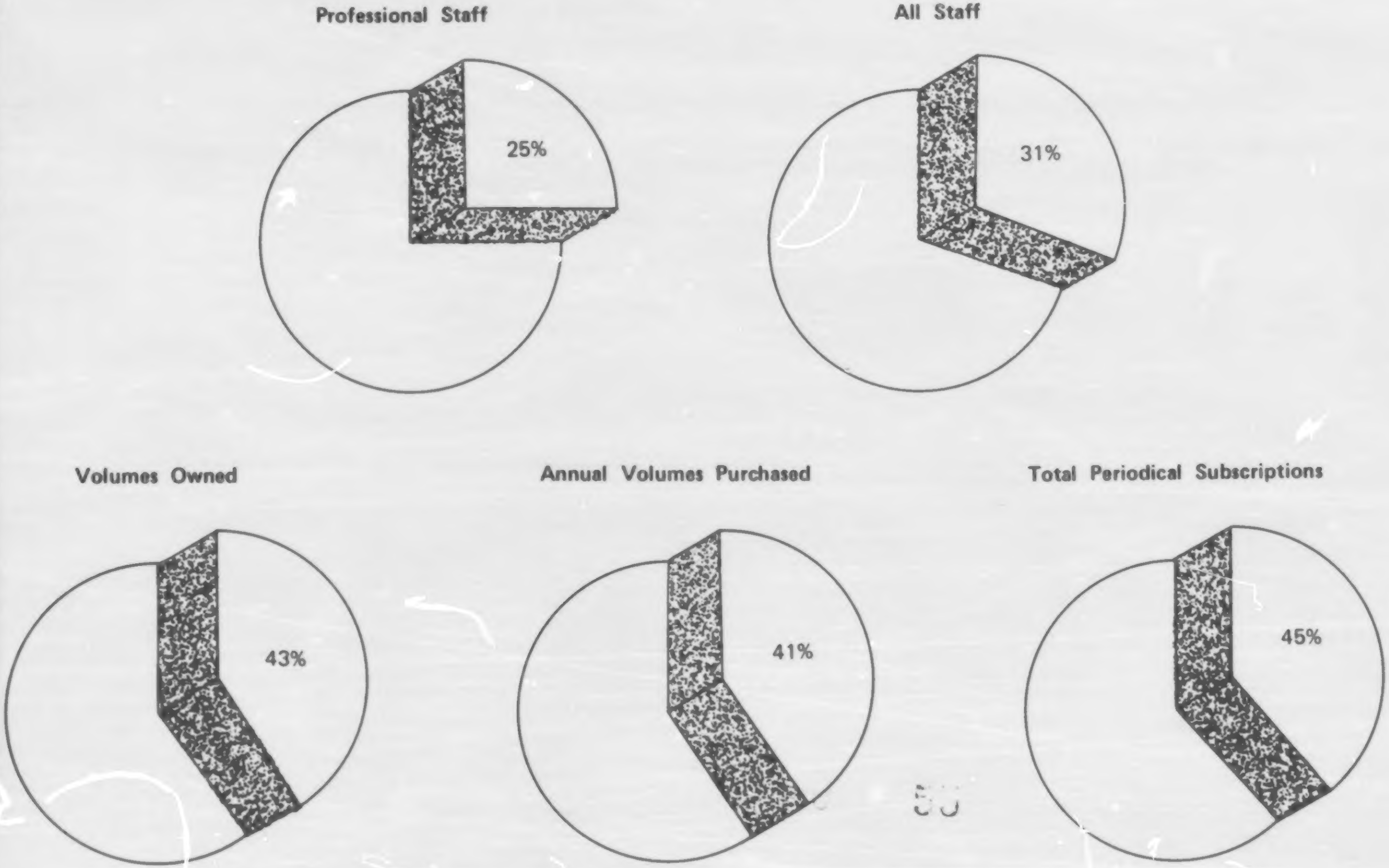


Although municipalities are not *required* by law to fund associations, many tend to supplement the associations' private trust funds. As a result, most associations receive, on the average, about *one-half* of the amount of tax support that is required by law for municipal libraries. This condition has existed since 1972 — earlier the level of tax support was even lower.

Hence, the impact of inflation on public libraries is much worse for associations, given their weak financial picture. Small budgets and little revenue growth greatly affect the resources available for library services. A comparison of resources in association and municipal libraries underscores this point (Chart II-11). Overall, a typical association possesses less than 40 percent of the resources in an average municipal library, even when excluding the larger municipal libraries from the comparison. The basic conclusion emerging from these facts is that many associations cannot supply adequate library services to those communities providing for their partial

Chart II-11

COMPARISON OF ASSOCIATION TO MUNICIPAL LIBRARY RESOURCES IN 1976



support. Fortunately, county libraries have the *legal* responsibility to do so. **The Commission feels that the basic validity of the county library law is upheld by the condition of library services in towns without municipal libraries.** County libraries are the ones most able to serve the State objective of promoting access to nearby services and are also in a better position to deliver quality services to residents. Therefore, the role of associations should be to assist county libraries in this endeavor.

In summary, many local library issues involve the improvement of access to nearby, quality services. Achieving better access will require a number of actions: keeping branch libraries open; buying more materials; providing active support for school libraries; and improving the working relationship with local government, among other measures. At the same time, county libraries should be afforded some optional ways of balancing their local and regional service roles. These actions represent the bare minimum necessary to achieve the new goal for public libraries in a time of limited resources and money — the preservation of quality library services.

Section Three: Investing in Adequate Library Services

Overview

Great efforts have been devoted to the development of local library services. The State has long sought to promote local libraries through the passage of enabling legislation and the distribution of financial aids. At the local level, many counties and municipalities have established, and now support, their own libraries; presently, there are more than 300 local libraries and associations in existence. These efforts have resulted in a substantial commitment of resources to the local library function. Local government allocates the greatest share — currently over 50 million dollars of local tax revenues per year. The State adds another 6 million dollars while federal aid accounts for a little more. This kind of financial support invites a very basic question: as public libraries begin to move into the 1980s, how will this investment in library services change — especially in a era of inflation, tax limitations, shifting priorities and cutbacks?

The answer to this question involves more than the ability to secure additional funds. Not only is a continuing expansion of resources unlikely, but new governmental priorities may well displace or reduce older, existing commitments. Hence, the overriding objective of future investments in libraries must be to make better use of whatever resources are available. Although present means to do so are few, ways must be found to encourage financial resources to be as productive as possible. Reconsidering old habits and experimenting with new ideas will have to take place; the other alternative — maintaining the *status quo* — can only lead to a decline in services. Overall, these new directions will require firm leadership tempered with a patient hand. It is appropriate that the State Library be asked to take on this responsibility.

Stability for County Library Systems

The success of new ways of maintaining quality services will largely depend upon the ability of libraries to work together. For this reason, it is important, as well, to develop new laws to deal with the complex structures and conflicting service roles of county libraries. County libraries — by virtue of their local systems and regional responsibilities — are directly related to many municipal and association libraries. These working relationships have become strained as a result of existing county library structures and roles. In a growing number of instances, working arrangements are now breaking down and disagreements regarding service responsibilities are occurring more often. Overall, there is more contention among local libraries and government officials as to how county libraries should meet their obligations, often in the absence of a common understanding about the nature of these obligations.

Clearly, the tense and strained atmosphere is not conducive to the development of new proposals which would benefit libraries and the people who use them. Conversely, the absence of alternatives for resolving problems stemming from the present structure and role of county libraries constrains the emergence of good working relationships.

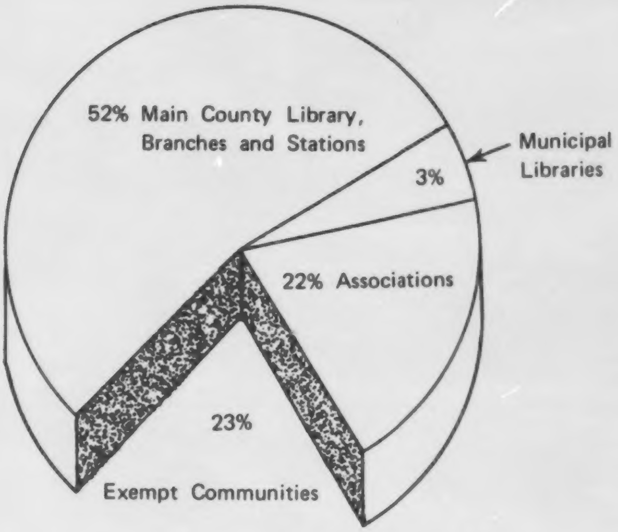
The need for change is made clear by taking a closer look at the structure and roles of county libraries. Several possible types of library operations were identified in a previous discussion of county library systems, including other public libraries, associations and branches of the county library itself. Yet it is important to realize that the *membership* of any county library is actually the municipalities helping to support it. Associations, branches, stations, etc. are the vehicles through which the county library delivers services (e.g., books, general reference, children's programs) to member municipalities, and can be considered as "stand-ins" for these municipalities. Thus, each member municipality can be associated with a particular type of library service outlet in the county library system.

The extent of services received by any member municipality will depend largely upon the type of library outlet supplying them. In turn, the *level* of service received from the county library can determine a municipality's willingness to remain a member of the county system. Chart II-12 shows the total distribution of service outlets to municipalities supporting county libraries.

By far, most member municipalities are served directly by county libraries and their branches or stations. In these cases, substantial county library services are provided in the municipalities. Services tend to match the size and need of the individual communities: smaller ones have storefront stations or receive bookmobile services from the main library; larger, more developed communities have expanded stations or branches of the county library. With some exceptions, these municipalities represent a stable base of local support for county libraries. The exceptions are usually cases where either the county library has weak service outlets (e.g., few or no branches, poorly staffed stations) or when a community prefers a municipal library under its own control.

Chart II-12

SERVICE OUTLETS OF COUNTY LIBRARIES
1978



County libraries are also strongly supported by member towns that have their own municipal libraries. Library law allows towns to give up their membership in county library systems if they support free public libraries established by law. Yet a number of these towns have voluntarily chosen to remain as members of the county system. The county library generally assists these municipal libraries by backing up their services with its larger collection of materials. However, in terms of *total* county library membership, this is a small group of communities.

Questions about the base of support for county libraries most often begin when member towns also support associations. Wherever an association coexists with a county library, there is a split in support and control of library services to the community. The best example of this division can be seen in the distribution of tax revenue to pay for library services. In the year 1977, member municipalities gave 40 percent of the total library taxes to associations and 60 percent to county libraries. The size of both shares is significant but for different reasons. Overall, associations receive this significant share in light of their generally weak service picture. On the other hand, county libraries have the statutory responsibility to provide extensive, quality services but must do so using only three-fifths of the available funds. In the middle are the municipalities, who find themselves paying money to two libraries for local services. **This situation is a major cause of instability in county library systems. As local**

tax support to an association rises, it is often cost effective for a municipality to have the association become a municipal library. In this way, the municipality can leave the county library system and thus avoid a second library expenditure.

Aside from structural problems in county library systems, there are also questions about both the local and regional service roles of county libraries. Two major kinds of role problems exist, namely, coordination of local services and equal provision of regional services.

Associations are involved in the coordination problem — dealing with the question of control over local library services. As noted, associations are private, nonprofit library service corporations, although they usually receive significant public tax support to supplement their private funding sources. However, they continue to operate as autonomous agencies. As a result, associations may or may not work in direct cooperation with the county library in providing local services. However, there is no basis in law or regulation to guide this joint provision of services.

Failing to come to some working agreement with individual associations forces a county library to take certain actions, namely to: (1) establish a county service outlet in the municipality; (2) give a book allowance to the association and let it provide the services alone; or (3) refrain from providing local services altogether and let the association provide library services to the community.

Obviously, all of these options amount to leaving the associations alone. Attempts by county libraries to coordinate services of associations violates their autonomy. Even worse, such actions could encourage associations to petition their communities to become municipal libraries — thus remaining free from county library control. Hence, county libraries can contribute to the instability of municipal membership in their systems by trying to deal with associations.

Overall, there appear to be numerous operational tensions between county libraries and associations. These problems usually involve matters of service coordination and the sharing of resources. Since there is no consistent basis for a joint approach to library services, unnecessary duplication of services can readily occur, and, conversely, service gaps as likely as duplication. Ultimately, it is the people desiring quality services who suffer from this ambiguous situation.

The second category of questions about county library service roles deals with regional services. The conflict between the local and regional service roles of county libraries was noted previously. The point was made that the State Library has encouraged the provision of regional, i.e., network services by county libraries (network structure and services are major topics in Chapter 3). These services are available both to municipalities that are members of the county library system and to remaining communities in the county that are exempt from the system, or about 23 percent of all communities served by county libraries.

In seeking to provide *network* services to such a large group of communities, county libraries can increase the instability in their systems. First of all, resources can be drained away from member municipalities, thereby reducing their services and potentially inviting municipalities to leave the system and set up their own libraries. In addition, if county libraries actually *did* provide extensive network services there would again be no need to remain a member of the system. A community could support a small municipal library, become exempt from the system, and yet receive extra services via the network program. This scenario can easily happen wherever a municipality is already providing most of the funding for an association. It would not take much more money to support a municipal library and thus be exempt from the county system — and from a second library expenditure as well. Hence, in order to maintain stability of county library systems, an edge in service provision must be given to member communities. In other words, there cannot be equal provision of network services to both member and exempt towns without creating the possibility that member towns will then seek to leave their county library systems.

After examining the county library situation in great detail, the Commission has confirmed the problems outlined above: the structure of county library systems does indeed lead to an unstable base of support by member municipalities; services are impeded by a lack of formal working relationships with associations; and exempt communities, through their municipal libraries, demand network services that strain the capacities of county libraries to satisfy the members of their local systems. In short, the structure and service roles of county libraries create an ongoing process of withdrawal by municipalities from county library systems. For these, and other reasons, 18 communities have left the county systems during the last ten years. The loss of communities also signals the loss of their municipal tax bases as a source of financial support for county libraries. A continuing loss of membership in a county system can only erode the position of a county library as a major factor in the provision of library services in New Jersey.

Hence, **the Commission believes that substantial revision of county library law is necessary.** Without these changes in the law, the problems of county libraries will soon grow to be a major obstacle in the provision of both local and network library services. Such an occurrence would be intolerable to the State. It would contradict the historical State interest in improving the access to local library services for all citizens. In addition, this situation would undermine the statutory mandate of the State Library to coordinate a statewide system or network of libraries. Therefore, it is in the interests of the State and its citizens that ways be made available in law to surmount problems related to the structure and roles of county libraries.

In order to support such changes in county library law, **the Commission feels that certain guiding principles should first be established.** The development of alternatives must begin with a clarification of the basic purpose of county libraries. Communities without municipal, i.e., free public libraries established by law are required to support a county library if one exists in their county. In light of this mandate, library associations can only be considered in a secondary library service role. There are two principal reasons for this assertion: First, county libraries are the ones responsible to communities without municipal libraries for the provision of quality services in accordance with state standards. In contrast, a municipality voluntarily chooses to help finance an association and there are no guarantees that such support will continue in future years or meet the legal minimum levels of funding set for county and municipal libraries. Second, most associations, on the average, are not adequate substitutes for municipal libraries, their resources being too small to serve as a base for quality local library services.

Hence, the Commission is of the opinion that only county libraries have the resources and legal responsibility to provide quality services — equivalent to those provided by municipal libraries. Any changes in existing county library law should reflect this fact.

While granting the importance of county libraries in providing quality local services, **the Commission nevertheless believes that county library systems must continue to accept the possible loss of member communities.** At some point in time, the needs of any of these communities may indeed be better served by a municipal library. In addition, county library law has *always* been interpreted as allowing withdrawal in return for the establishment of a municipal library. In retrospect, it appears that enabling the establishment of municipal libraries is the principal objective of local library law overall — providing, in addition, the opportunity to establish a library on a county basis for all towns unable to take advantage of municipal library law. Thus, requiring an absolute or even long-term limitation on any future withdrawals would set a *new* primary objective in local library law — the maintenance of an existing county library. Such a result would be inequitable to all municipalities mandated to support a county library *until* they establish a municipal library — denying them the legal right, already exercised by 221 communities, to establish their own libraries. **Therefore the Commission feels that library systems cannot be granted permanent stability by denying, over an extended period of time, any future withdrawals by member municipalities.**

In general, the Commission supports the development of provisions in law that would grant *some* relief from the present situation to all parties — county libraries, associations, members of local systems and exempt communities. Some of these provisions should probably be mandatory while others would be more attractive as options. Each should be able to address some aspect of the structure and role problems discussed earlier. On this basis, there appear to be at least 5 major actions which should be considered for incorporation into library law in the course of its revision: (1) having county library systems cope with future withdrawals, (2) closer working relationships between associations and county libraries, (3) promoting the reorganization of county library systems to improve access to nearby services, (4) pooling financial resources in order to strengthen public library services throughout a county, and (5) reducing the burden on county libraries to provide network services.

Tools Available for Local Library Development

The earlier parts of this chapter discussed at length the issues facing local libraries in New Jersey, and identified a number of specific problem areas. Most of the key areas were related to either library funding or programs — the primary bases for most governmental activities aimed at improving library service. Any remaining activities usually relate either to the monitoring of program operations or to compliance with the legal framework of existing programs. Generally then, money, programs, and management activities are the tools used to improve and develop library services.

The State Library has, over the years, occupied the central governmental role in the development of local library services. The duties of the State Library, at the local level, including administration, consultation, development, preservation and regulation of all publicly-supported libraries and services. In performing its role, the State Library acts chiefly as administrator of local library laws and regulations. For the most part, state-level efforts to develop local libraries have been limited to the administration of local aid programs. The fact that library development is mainly confined to monitoring aid regulations is understandable in light of present funding limitations for other types of programs. Moreover, aid regulations serve to some extent as standards for minimum services, and it is therefore important to promote compliance with such regulations. The Commission recognizes that compliance with minimum resource standards is a necessary objective for improving the provision of local library services. However, **since these resource standards** *are already* **being met by most public libraries, questions must be raised about the direction of library development activities in** *future* **years.** It is a signal that present standards need to be revised — that is, adjusted upwards in order to create new levels of achievement? If so, state-level development activities for local libraries will not change at all because they will continue to have only one dimension — namely, to improve services through compliance with aid regulations.

Efforts are underway around the nation to broaden the activities of state library agencies. The New Jersey State Library is actively involved in several national organizations working to achieve this goal. Current guidelines, set by these organizations, suggest that active library development and coordination of statewide library resources should be made the top priorities of state libraries. Planning, initiation, and evaluation of library programs need to be increased across the board. Given the present situation, an emphasis on these areas should work well in New Jersey. It would considerably broaden the approach to library service development, which currently relies on aid standards alone. To its credit, the State Library has begun to work with these other aspects of library development, but much remains to be done.

The Commission believes that the State Library needs to expand its library development activities in a way that seeks to initiate as well as administer. As outlined in Table II-2, there are a number of new activities which are worthy of consideration regarding local libraries.

Table II-2

IMPROVING THE ROLE OF THE STATE LIBRARY IN LOCAL LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT

Needed Activities	Description
● *Promoting Development of Public Library Resources*	A new aid program designed to upgrade library collections, based upon an analysis of community needs.
● *Safeguarding Local Access to Nearby Library Services*	A new aid program designed to assist branch libraries, based upon financial need.
● *Stronger Involvement in the Public School Education Act of 1975*	A clear legal basis for both school media centers and the State Library in the Thorough and Efficient program for public education.
● *Conserving Historical Resources*	A new aid program designed to identify and organize valuable materials as special collections.
● *Tightening Compliance with Library Standards*	A new provision to deny per capita aid after a period of noncompliance with regulations.

Section Two of this chapter discussed the present lack of effort in each of these areas. It also outlined the need to correct these problems in order to preserve quality library services. Based upon its research findings, **the Commission feels that these actions are the minimum necessary to maintain the longstanding State interest in promoting local library services to its citizens.** In addition, such measures will provide the Division of the State Library with a renewed capacity to satisfy its mandated responsibilities to local libraries and communities.

In summary, local libraries require some options for organizing and delivering their services. These measures are needed to enable libraries to withstand economic pressures in the near future. The foregoing section discussed two basic types of action:

> First, county libraries need flexibility in working with other libraries. Firmer support for county libraries should be tied to a commitment to provide nearby community services. Local financial resources

should be pooled in a way that improves the services of all public libraries in a given county.

Second, new programs are needed to revitalize the State's approach to local library development. These programs should be conducted by the State Library and act to offset limits in local tax support to libraries.

The Commission believes that the State can do no less and still promote access to quality local library services for its citizens.

CHAPTER 3

NETWORKING AMONG LIBRARIES

Overview

Every library is restricted in the extent of services it can provide to people. There are physical limitations such as the size of buildings, staffs and collections. More importantly, the funding of most libraries is usually tied up in supporting their present levels of operation with little money left for expansion. Yet at the same time, the library profession has traditionally sought to meet the service needs of the 'walk-in' public. Indeed, most people using libraries expect nothing less than full service — their questions answered and materials made available on the spot. Obviously, there is a basic conflict here. Libraries are sometimes caught in a position where their resources fall short of meeting the service needs of everyone.

The idea of a *network* evolved as a way to overcome the inherent limitations of each library's ability to satisfy all service needs. In practice, a network can be the means by which libraries can tap the resources of each other. Through a network, a library can search other libraries for materials and information it does not possess itself. In this way, the requests of library users can be filled regardless of the physical and financial limits on the individual library. Thus a library network is really indispensible to the provision of quality services, without which certain requests for information and materials would go unanswered.

This is the rationale for the present New Jersey Library Network which is managed by the State Library. The network's major objective is the provision of a process for the interchange of information or materials among all libraries in the State. In effect, people can go to any nearby library and be able to use the collections and services of many libraries. Their local librarians will contact other libraries using network procedures and obtain whatever services are necessary. The network thus acts to improve statewide access to library resources.

The library network is therefore a vital part of the State's program to promote access to nearby library services. At the local level, the network is important as a means of improving the delivery of library services — allowing each library to go beyond its own walls in the search for information and materials. For the library user, the network is perhaps the best way of locating indepth or hard-to-find information. Therefore a network's value is determined by its ability to answer questions and find materials.

Networks are distinguished from each other on the basis of the methods each employs to meet the demands for library services. Interestingly, a wide variation of network approaches exists nationwide. Moreover, the concepts and practices of library networking is changing in the United States today and new approaches are being developed at the national, regional and state levels. A major factor shaping these networks is the application of computer technology to library operations. As a result, the ability of networks to supply information and materials is improving rapidly.

The New Jersey Library Network, now some 12 years old, needs to be reconsidered — both on the basis of its own performance record and in light of network innovations elsewhere in the country. The best of the state-type networks have owed much of their success to four basic features: (1) an ability to involve different *types* of libraries in network activities, (2) a flexible organization, (3) simple procedures to find and process information and, above all, (4) a strong state commitment to a network program. These ingredients for a well-running network can guide an evaluation of the current New Jersey network as well. At the outset, possible changes in the present network approach must be weighed against the consequences of doing nothing. As always, the primary State objective of any change should be to improve the access to library information and materials for all of its citizens.

State Responsibility for a Library Network

The Division of the State Library is directed by law to perform a number of duties on behalf of New Jersey's citizens. These activities are intended to *supplement* the services of the other libraries in the State. In some instances, the State Library is empowered to provide direct services, e.g., legislative reference to State government and a special library for blind or handicapped persons. However, the main thrust of State Library activities involves working with the various types of libraries in the State to improve overall services. These activities are generally described as "library development." Chapter two dealt with the State Library's involvement in *local library* development — that is, working with public and school libraries on an individual basis to improve services. However, there is a second major kind of library development used to supplement or extend library services around the State — library *network* development.

One of the major statutory duties of the State Library is to coordinate a statewide system of libraries (N.J.S.A. 18A:73-35). This mandate is the foundation for the State program of library network development. The State Library uses the network concept to organize the various libraries in the State as a cooperative system. In this system, a uniform set of networking procedures allows different libraries to exchange information and materials. The State Library assigns certain libraries special roles in the network system and also manages its ongoing activities.

The network development program is a necessary counterpart to local library development activities. It is broader in scope than the local development program in that *all* types of libraries can belong to it — college, university and special libraries as well as local libraries are eligible to participate in the program. More importantly, the network program is a way for individual libraries to add to their own services through a process of mutual assistance.

The network, then, is an indispensible part of the State's long-standing program to promote access to library services for all of its citizens. Through the process of networking, each library, and therefore anyone using it, potentially has the means to utilize the resources of the *whole* community of libraries in New Jersey. In the near future, networking will become a primary way for libraries to survive tight operating budgets and rising costs — while still providing up-to-date, quality services. Therefore **the Commission feels that the New Jersey Library Network should be strengthened as much as possible, and without delay. A viable network can be the best way for the Sate to improve library services to citizens on a statewide basis, given the practical limit to aid funds for libraries.**

Structure and Functions of the Statewide Library Network

The New Jersey Library Network is not readily apparent to most library users. For the most part, the network cannot be seen in operation; there are no network buildings or ways of visually distinguishing those librarians engaged in network activities. Essentially, the library network is a process that increases the extent of services available to people using libraries. By following the written procedures for this process, a library can contact other libraries and request information or materials not available in its own collection. Any library can thus be more successful in filling a patron's request for specific information or materials.

In practice, the network process works best in locating specialized or technical materials not available in the average library collection. This allows most libraries to concentrate their financial resources on services and materials that meet the *daily* needs of library patrons — using the network to acquire expensive or hard-to-find materials from other large or highly specialized libraries. Hence, the network offers a way both to stretch library funds and to back up day-to-day collections with the greater resources of other libraries.

In 1967, the State Legislature passed a library aid law that set into motion the means of forming a library network. Part of this State aid program provided certain funds for libraries engaged in network activities (N.J.S.A. 18A:74-1 *et seq.*). Based on this law, the State Library designated certain libraries to perform network roles in accordance with its prescribed procedures, resulting in the State's present library network.

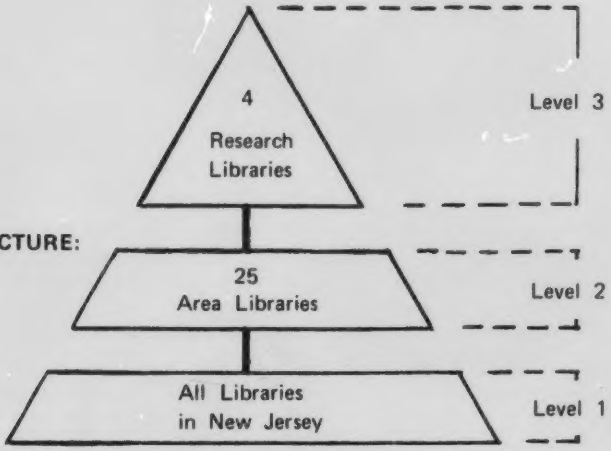
The network process outlined in Chart III-1 is based upon a fixed grouping of New Jersey's libraries into three "levels of service." This conceptual *structure* of three network levels acts to separate libraries according to the type of service they provide. At the bottom or local level are all libraries in the State — regardless or their type or size. Basically, every library at this level (e.g., municipal, county, association, school, college, university) operates independently — serving the people in its community or organization. Hence, the local level of service is the sum total of the daily activities of individual libraries *without regard to a network.*

Chart III-1

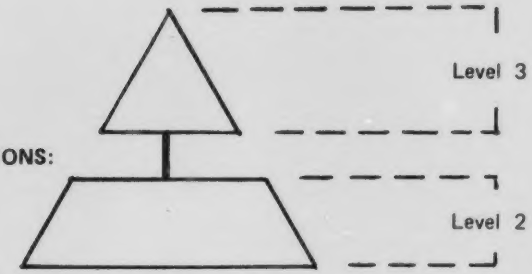
NEW JERSEY LIBRARY NETWORK

N.J.S.A. 18A:74-1 et seq.

BASIC STRUCTURE:



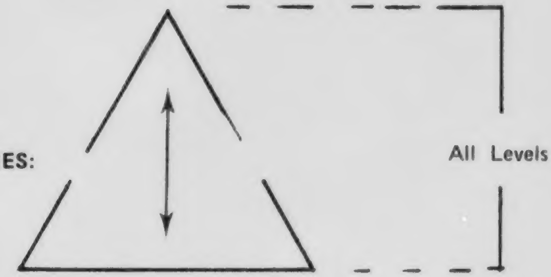
MAJOR FUNCTIONS:



To Level 1 Libraries and Citizens:

- Provide information, i.e., *Reference Services.*
- Deliver Materials, i.e., *Interlibrary Loan Services.*

KEY PROCEDURES:



- New Jersey Interlibrary Loan Code

In contrast, the upper levels of the pyramid identify certain local level libraries that *also* perform network services. The second, or area level, is composed of 26 designated municipal and county libraries. Similarly, the third, or research level, consists of four of the largest libraries in the State (Newark Public Library, Princeton University Library, Rutgers University Library, and the State Library). Each of these libraries provides network services to any of the libraries at the bottom or local level upon request.

The two primary service functions of area and research libraries are to convey information (generally called reference service) and ship materials (generally called interlibrary loan service) to any local library. In this way, a local library can satisfy its patrons even if it does not have the resources to do so in its own collection. The difference in services between area and research libraries is mostly one of degree. Research libraries, by virtue of their size, are able to provide both a wider, and more specialized, range of information and materials.

There are a number of *procedures* associated with the provision of network services. A lot of them deal with the protocol for libraries to request and share their resources. For example, each area library is responsible for network services to all libraries and residents in a designated geographical region of the State. To receive *network* services, all libraries and residents in the region must contact their area library in a formal and uniform manner. Each area library passes unfilled requests for service to either Newark Public Library or the State Library. Both of these libraries act as *regional* coordinators of all third level requests to the four research libraries. Other procedures are concerned with such matters as conditions for loans, specific forms for requests, expenses and so on. All network procedures are outlined in a formal "code" that is binding on the area and research libraries but voluntary to all other, local level libraries. The detailed administration of the code is, in turn, provided in a companion operations manual.

Essentially then, the statewide library network is organized into a three-level group of libraries and a two-level category of network service. The principal services available from area and research libraries are reference and interlibrary loan, and the actual procedures used to conduct these services are prescribed in a written code and manual. Taken together, the structure, functions, and procedures of the network provide a process through which specialized, and hard to find, information and materials can be delivered to people on request from their nearby, local library.

The statewide library network has been developing since 1967, the enactment date of the library aid law. There have been two major achievements of the library network. First, the 26 area libraries have received additional State aid funds to expand their individual collections of materials. This has led to a substantial increase in area resources available for serving libraries and people in these regions. Hence, area libraries areas are currently among the strongest public libraries in the State. The second accomplishment is the continued operation of the network itself. The network serves as the primary

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basis for present and future cooperation among libraries. Many innovations in library services, as well as continued improvement in existing services, will increasingly depend on an operating statewide network. **The Commission believes that the network has, over the years, demonstrated the validity of its underlying philosophy and has added a new dimension to the services available to citizens of the State.** Consistent with the historical interest of the State regarding library services, the network has improved access to library services across New Jersey.

Overall Performance of the Network Process

Since the statewide library network is important to the provision of quality library services, it must be carefully examined and improved wherever necessary. Recently, some problems have become evident in the network process which warrant such examination. Essentially, this kind of network is a *fixed* system, or *set* structure, used to group all libraries in the State into three distinct categories. Furthermore, the libraries in each category are directed to follow *uniform* procedures in sharing resources with other libraries. Clearly, this type of network arrangement is generally rigid in practice. In contrast, though the network *structure* and *operating procedures* are rather well-defined, the *functions*, (i.e., services) performed by area and research libraries remain ambiguous. These functions of the network are not clearly expressed in law and are cited only in the distribution formulas for State aid to libraries. While it is true that network functions are open-ended and therefore difficult to define with great precision, the lack of a firm basis in law has resulted in considerable confusion among those libraries performing, and those receiving, network services. A closer look at the functions of area libraries illustrates this point.

Each of the 26 municipal and county libraries at the second level of the network signs a State contract to provide area services in their service regions. Appended to these contracts is a list of "area library responsibilities and minimal services" (Table III-1). This list is supposed to represent a definition of area library functions. However, **the Commission has found little distinction in practice between the functions of** ***area*** **libraries and many** ***local*** **libraries.** This ambiguity can best be explained by reviewing the performance of area libraries in the network process.

In regard to the two principal network services, interlibrary loan and reference, only the loans are measured at all, and the record of network performance regarding interlibrary loans is only fair. The total number of loans statewide, though small, has grown at a rate of over 90 percent during the past ten years. However, the number of *unfilled* loan requests has grown *six* times as fast. This record of loans, in and of itself, warrants a reappraisal of the current library network — especially its basic assumptions, as well as the capacities of the 26 public libraries to provide area services.

Table III-1

AREA LIBRARY RESPONSIBILITIES AND SERVICES

Responsibilities

- Subscribe to at least 350 current periodicals.
- Add a minimum of 5,000 titles per year.
- Maintain an area-wide coordinating council of libraries.
- Open central facility a minimum of 60 hours per week for reference services.
- Build and maintain a broad basic subject collection of at least 150,000 volumes.
- Build up resources to serve special interests of the service area.
- Develop a comprehensive reference collection.
- Maintain general and subject indexes and bibliographies.
- Make provision for 150 reader seats in central facility.

Services

- In-building use of resources by area residents.
- Reference and reading guidance to area residents.
- Interlibrary information and reference service to public libraries in the area.
- Single copy photocopy service at cost to public libraries in the area.
- Cooperative lists of holdings among area libraries.
- Information and publicity about area library services.
- Interlibrary loan service to all libraries in the area.

There are several reasons for not measuring the reference services of the network related to each of the three general types of area library reference services. First, each area library is directed to answer all questions from people coming to the library from anywhere in its service region. No measurement is made of this service, largely because there is no simple way to separate "area" questions from "other" questions — that is, those questions asked by residents of the community supporting the area library as a *local* library. Second, the area libraries are supposed to answer questions received by telephone from the other libraries in their service regions. This service has the same problem of identification as the "walk-in" reference service and likewise is not measurable. Third, area libraries are often required to locate detailed information or materials in response to either walk-in or telephone reference services. This is a complicated, professional process conducted by skilled librarians, involving the use of certain types of locational devices created especially for the library function. These *finding tools* are often technically-ordered lists (arranged by subject, publisher, etc.) of various resources held by other libraries. Area libraries try to develop such finding tools cooperatively to assist one another in providing network services. These efforts to improve network reference services are not usually given any credit in measuring the extent of area library services and are thus an overlooked element in the functions of the network. A well-run network is heavily dependent upon the availability of proper locational devices to find materials accurately and quickly. However, the network process in New Jersey does not provide for a broader development of these finding mechanisms. For example, the few existing computer-assisted tools are often out of date and, generally, the ability to locate resources in both college and school libraries is uneven.

A viable library network is essential to the provision of adequate library services in the future. Therefore **the Commission supports two general actions to improve library networking in New Jersey**: (1) an ongoing development of proper locational devices to allow efficient networking of information and materials among libraries; and (2) recognition of these efforts as a primary service of the network program, essential to interlibrary loan and reference services. To accomplish these objectives it will be necessary to address the causes of functional problems —the weak statutory base for the network process and the limited ability of area and research libraries to locate or share resources. It should be noted, however, that within the severe limits of existing laws and funding, the State Library has been working with the Rutgers University Library to reduce deficiencies in networking tools.

Distribution of Aid in Support of the Network

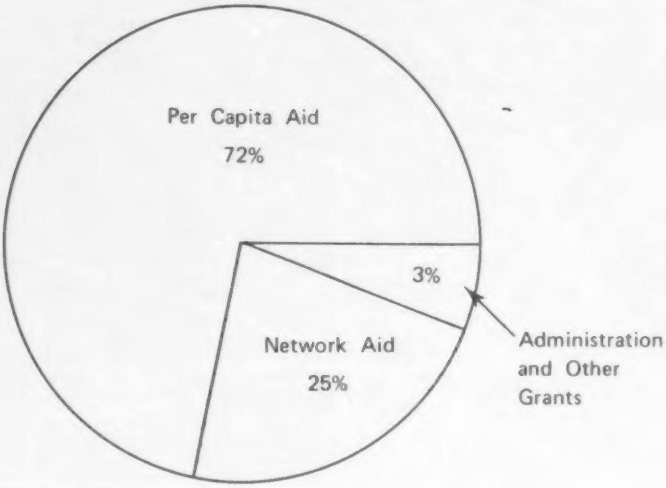
Another way of understanding the weak points in the current network process is to view it from the standpoint of funding. The library network is mainly supported by State and federal aid funds. About 25 percent of the total funds made available by the State library aid law are earmarked for network purposes (Chart III-2). These monies, since 1972 averaging a little over 2 million dollars per year, have been allocated by law to the area and research libraries (N.J.S.A. 18A:74-1 *et seq.*). Over 85 percent of the total annual State network aid, or about $1,700,000 is distributed among the 26 area libraries. Since 1973, the State Library has also committed to network development more than 50 percent of its federal aid funds, or about $1,000,000 annually. In addition, the public and university libraries offering network services may or may not use their own *local* budget funds for network purposes. To the degree that aid monies do not equal the costs incurred in providing interlibrary loan and reference services, these libraries may be using their own funds.

In any case, the general purposes of financial aid for networking are twofold. First, aid money is provided *automatically* to the 26 area libraries and 4 research libraries in return for agreeing, by contract, to take part in the network process. Hence, network aid can be viewed as a return to these libraries for making certain services *available* to local libraries, rather than as a return for services *actually performed* by the area or research libraries. The best evidence to support this view of network aid is the legal formula for distributing State funds to area libraries. It consists of a fixed grant plus an additional amount per capita. On the other hand, aids to the research and regional libraries are strictly fixed grants. In addition, the State Library has made the decision to allocate some of its federal "network development" funds to pay for the delivery of interlibrary loans, since this delivery service is assumed not to be covered by the State grant to area libraries.

Chart III-2

DISTRIBUTION OF STATE AID TO LIBRARY SERVICES

1979



The second purpose of network aid, particularly in the case of the 26 area libraries, is to provide additional money to "build up" collections and facilities of libraries with network roles. For example, public libraries providing area services have to meet certain minimum requirements such as collection size. Initially, many area libraries did not meet these requirements when signing their network contracts with the State Library, and had to use a portion of their area grants to buy additional books. Fortunately, most area libraries presently exceed these requirements and only a small portion of their grants are used in purchasing materials, mainly to keep certain items in their collections up to date.

These two reasons for the current distribution of network financial aid clearly illustrates the overlap between local library and network library activities, especially as related to the area library part of the network process. Twenty-six public libraries are provided with State and federal funds above the amounts they receive from the per capita aid program. These additional funds are not given in return for network services performed but on a general basis — to make network services available and to build up library resources. As was noted earlier, library laws do not differentiate clearly between network services and local library services; the use of network aid is therefore equally unclear.

Many libraries grouped at the first level of the network (public, school, and college libraries) actually believe there is little difference between their own services and supplementary network services. These libraries contend that the existing network aid program to the 26 area libraries is little more than additional *local* aid to 26 public libraries. Unfortunately, the ambiguity of current network functions suggests that such an outcome is quite possible, though inadvertent.

The Commission believes that the functions of the library network need to be more precisely defined in law, in order to improve both service performance and fiscal accountability. Network programs based on this law should also be expressed in more detail while the delivery of network services should be recorded on an annual, statewide basis. Without an improvement in network accountability at the local level, the willingness among local libraries to cooperate in the network process will continue to decline.

Another important aspect of network aid relates to the nearly total support by federal funds of certain statewide, local library activities. One of these activities, the *regional film center*, bears directly on the prospective shape and functions of the New Jersey library network. There are five film centers strategically located around the State; each based in one of the larger public libraries. The centers loan 16 mm films and equipment to the general public.

Audiovisual materials have recently emerged as important educational and recreational library resources because they are a modern alternative to printed forms of communication. Such resources are an integral part of the contemporary library function and must be considered in any examination of the adequacy of library services in New Jersey.

The key question about film centers if *how* they should be addressed by the State's library policy and programs. There are three alternative ways to approach this question at the State level: (1) to assist all local libraries in the provision of film services to residents of their communities; (2) to incorporate film services as part of the library network; or (3) to continue the present arrangement of federal subsidy. **The Commission supports the second, library network alternative, as the best way to provide substantial audio-visual services in New Jersey.** State aid resources would be stretched too thin in promoting film services in every local library. These services are simply too expensive to acquire and maintain in proper operating condition. In addition, much unnecessary duplication of film resources would result from adopting the first alternative and could be avoided by a consolidated, regional service system. The third alternative is an equally poor choice. At present, the State Library is committing over *one-third* of its available federal library funds to the five regional film centers; about $600,000 annually. The continued use of such a large share of federal funds for film centers can seriously impair the State Library's overall program of library development in New Jersey.

As discussed earlier, the State Library must initiate a number of new programs in the near future, both on a local and network basis, in order to continue the promotion of adequate library services in New Jersey. The State Library therefore needs flexibility in the use of developmental funds for such new activities and federal aid is the primary source of these monies. **Therefore the Commission believes that financial support for regional film centers should be shifted (from a federal subsidy) to a stable form of ongoing State assistance.** These centers have a demonstrated record of success and no longer fall into the developmental category of library activity.

A number of organizational problems will have to be solved *before* it is appropriate for the State to assume this funding responsibilityfor regional film centers. First, each of the film centers will have to be administratively organized as a separate service unit. While these centers should be physically located in or near public libraries, both fiscal and management accountability for the centers must be independent of the libraries. The accountability problems of the area libraries should not be repeated in this case. Second, the centers should become an integrated part of the general library network — sharing resources among themselves and with all other libraries participating in the network process. Third, a resolution of the respective roles of regional film centers and county audiovisual aid commissions in the provision of film services in New Jersey (N.J.S.A. 18A:51-1 to 12), is necessary.

Role of Public Libraries in a Network Process

It is obvious that all types of libraries can be involved in a network process. A number of factors discussed earlier explain the more frequent participation of *public* libraries in the network. Most public libraries are *voluntary* participants — receiving network services as first level libraries. *Active* participants — those public libraries delivering network services — have been encountering a number of serious operational problems, all related to the ambiguous distinction between network and local library functions.

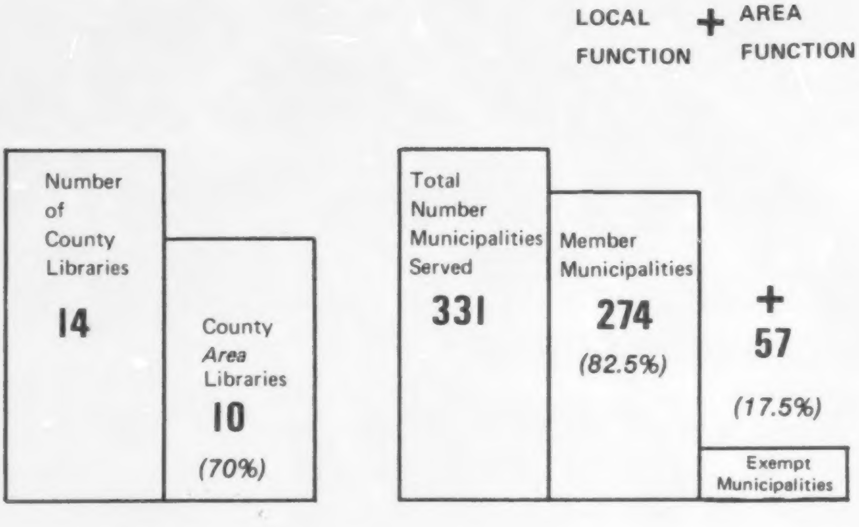
There are two instances where the overlap in local and network services is severe enough to question the continued validity of the network itself. This overlap in services is the main reason for a major revision of library network law. Without essential change in the structure and functions of the network, no real improvement in the delivery of cooperative library services, at the local level, will be possible.

One of the two major areas of overlap in local and network services concerns county libraries in particular. *Section three* of the previous chapter outlined the consequences of this overlap from the perspective of county libraries. The conclusion drawn was that county libraries run the risk of increasing instability in their local systems by providing network services. The county library dilemma is caused in part by a basic feature of the present library network — the reliance upon 26 public libraries as the *sole* source of regional second-level network services.

Chart III-3 illustrates the situation faced by county libraries. Eleven of the twenty-six area libraries are also county libraries that provide *local* services to 274 municipalities and *network* services to an additional 57 exempt municipalities. This dual role strains the service capacity of county libraries *and* causes disruptions in the network process as well. Because of pressures to provide local services, for example, county libraries often consider their local branch systems as an integral part of the "area" program of the network. A comparison of the rate of interlibrary loans between *municipal* area libraries and *county* area libraries documents this condition. In 1977, there were 23 loans per thousand residents by county area libraries as opposed to just 5 loans per thousand residents by municipal area libraries. Clearly, local library services were included in the county library measurement, since exempt towns account for only 17 percent of the total number of towns served by county libraries and thus could not account for such a large difference in loan statistics.

Chart III-3

THE DUAL ROLE OF COUNTY LIBRARIES



However, this same group of exempt communities has begun to affect the direction of recent library legislation, as well as the future of the network itself. Special legislation was enacted in 1977, giving the freeholders of Morris County the option to utilize general appropriations in support of so-called "second level" library services. To the extent that such appropriations are derived from the tax ratables of both member *and* exempt communities, they constitute a county-wide library tax supporting the *network service program* of the county library. The rationale for the "Morris County Library Law" was that the county's area program could not be adequately supported from the State aid grant. In effect, this legislation provides the means for *general* support of the Morris County Library, which is faced with the possible withdrawal of municipalities from the county system.

This line of reasoning could apply to any other area library as well, yet not provide substantial evidence of new or improved network services. There are three drawbacks to the precedent established by this special law. First, the intent of the network is distorted; the library network in New Jersey is in danger of becoming *less* concerned with sharing resources and *more* involved in financially supporting individual libraries. Second, the network structure has become totally fixed in place. The State Library cannot seek to alter the structure or functions of the network without possibly contravening the Morris County library law. Third, the necessary orientation of county libraries toward local services, and away from network services, reduces the effectiveness of this law. Thus the law undermines the spirit of cooperation among libraries that is essential to the efficient operation of the network.

The present network library law is apparently at fault in this situation; it is simply too ambiguous concerning network structure and functions. In addition, library law places *two* regional responsibilities upon county libraries — local and network service provision — a difficult dual role to play, given their limited resources. Therefore, **the Commission supports changes in network structure and functions to eliminate the conflicting service roles of county libraries.**

The other major area of overlap in local and network services concerns the existence of networking at the first, or local, level of the network structure. According to the logic of the network structure, the first-level libraries are relegated to the daily business of providing services to their communities or organizations. They *receive* network services from the area and research libraries but do not *provide* any network services. In fact, this assumption is incorrect; a significant amount of networking *is* occurring at the first level of service — unaided and unrecognized by the current state network program. This type of network activity is most apparent among local public libraries. The Commission's staff's interviews with over 100 public librarians indicate that more than 55 percent were involved in first level resource sharing activities. These same librarians considered this kind of networking as independent of the state network.

The Commission feels that the existence of these independent

networking efforts is clear evidence of the need for changing the structure of the current state network. It does not make sense to promote a statewide program of resource sharing and ignore local efforts to do so. An additional emphasis on first-level networking can improve the performance of the overall network process in several ways: better use of total resources would be possible; less pressure for net work services, such as interlibrary loans, would occur at higher network levels; the cooperative spirit of many local libraries would be renewed, since many libraries, engaged in first-level resource sharing, would receive state network aid for the first time; and, tensions between the area and local libraries concerning the distribution of network aid could be significantly reduced. In short, **the Commission believes that cooperative efforts to share resources among local libraries should be incorporated into the legal basis for the New Jersey Library Network.** This revision of network library law would also include the larger local library cooperatives — called *federations* (N.J.S.A. 40:9A-1 *et seq.*). Overall, these changes in the network structure would be especially consistent with the long-standing State interest in promoting adequate, nearby library services to its citizens.

Participation of Non-Public Types of Libraries in a Network

The validity of the network concept and the strength of its programs both rely upon the ability to involve as many libraries, and types of libraries, as possible in the network process. In this way, the greatest amount of library information and materials can be made available to citizens. However, this kind of broad participation does not occur in the current New Jersey Library Network. Particularly affected by this problem are college and private business libraries (called *special* libraries). it would be advantageous to encourage better network participation by these libraries since they generally contain considerable specialized material and, consequently, the ability of the network to fill requests for technical or detailed materials could be greatly improved. Both the network structure and its processes appear incapable of correcting this situation. To make matters worse, college, special, and even school libraries often bypass the network because it is unsuited to their needs (see Table III-2).

College and other academic libraries have a very limited use for the present statewide library network. Non-public libraries, in general, find both the overall structure of the network, as well as its functions, not conducive to active participation. These non-public libraries will always be reluctant to join a statewide network if they have little hope of receiving adequate network services in return. Therefore **the Commission supports a reorganization of the New Jersey Library Network in a way that encourages the active participation of all non-public libraries in the State.**

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Table III-2

INTERLIBRARY LOAN PRACTICES

Interlibrary Loan Practices of Academic Libraries – 1979

	#	%
Restricted Interlibrary Loans (i.e., limited to state network procedures)	13	25
Unrestricted Interlibrary Loans (i.e., both within and outside state network)	41	79
Interlibrary loans bypassing Area Libraries (i.e., even when operating within the state network, academic libraries will often ignore the State Interlibrary Loan Code)	43	83
Total Number of Academic Libraries	52	

Source: New Jersey Department of Higher Education

Joint Interests in Library Planning and Administration

To be fair, part of the problem regarding academic library participation in the network lies in the organization of State government. An important split exists in State-level jurisdiction over the affairs of publicly-supported libraries. On the one hand, the Division of the State Library, in the Department of Education, is mandated by law to provide: (1) supplemental services for all New Jersey libraries; (2) interlibrary loan services; (3) advisory services for public libraries, school libraries, *libraries in institutions of higher education* and other libraries; (4) coordination of a statewide system of libraries; and (5) administration of state and federal aid programs for the development of libraries (N.J.S.A. 18A:73-35). In general, most of these duties involve working with academic libraries, either in a private advisory capacity or in relation to operations of the library network — the main device for establishing and coordinating a statewide system of libraries. However, the basis for the State Library's work with academic libraries is voluntary; it has no authority to direce the activities of academic libraries in any way.

In contrast, the Department of Higher Education is directed by its State Board to assist in coordinating State and federal programs for higher education as well as to encourage cooperative programs by academic institutions (N.J.S.A. 18A-3 *et seq.*). Concerning the legal base for higher education in New Jersey, it should be noted first that libraries are not often specifically mentioned in these laws; since academic libraries are integral parts of colleges and universities. In addition, these institutions are established by separate State laws, e.g., the County College Act of 1962. The Department of Higher Education establishes general policy for colleges and universities, but each is permitted to manage its internal affairs, including the library function. Finally, the various types of academic institutions (State colleges, community colleges, etc.) set up *councils* to support cooperative activities. These councils, working with the Department of Higher Education, are the primary source of academic library programs on a statewide basis. For example, the *Council of State Colleges* has recently begun to develop a networking capacity among the eight State college libraries.

Hence, planning and administration of library network activities among two major State agencies are independent of each other. The State Library is directed by law to establish a statewide network for all libraries, centrally administered at the State level. On the other hand, the Department of Higher Education is legally concerned only with resource sharing among academic libraries and their parent institutions.

The Commission believes that this separate approach to education and the library function is both well-established and necessary. However, the State interest in promoting library services to all of its citizens requires coordination of all networking activities. Citizens should have the means to receive library services from *any* publicly-supported library through a network process. Therefore, **the Commission endorses the establishment of an administrative mechanism at the state level to link networking arrangements among academic libraries with the New Jersey Library Network — in a manner that preserves the autonomy of each approach.** This action, which would be State-funded, should improve the ability of all citizens to obtain information and materials from any library network operation supported by public funds.

New Approaches to Networking

In summary, the statewide library network has laid the foundation for broad-based resource sharing among libraries in New Jersey. However, a number of major improvements should be made in the existing network structure and process. The Commission has found a number of reasons to support these necessary changes. They are outlined in Table III-3.

Table III-3

Evaluating the Performance of the New Jersey Library Network

Findings	Consequence
● *Provision of Network Services requires improvement.*	Growth rate for unfilled loan requests is 6 times greater than growth in filled requests. This situation can cause a loss of confidence in the network as a means to obtain information and materials.
● *Tools to Facilitate Networking Are Limited.*	Lack of communication devices and "finding" tools hampers the network process. This inability to locate possible sources of information and materials reduces the provision of network services.
● *Accountability of Network Operations Is Insufficient.*	Network services are not adequately measured. As a result, local libraries have no evidence that network financial aid supports actual services. This doubt erodes the spirit of cooperation essential to a network process.
● *Structure and Functions Are Ambiguous in Actual Practice.*	Overlap in network and local library service roles is a constant source of confusion. It creates tensions among libraries and also blurs any distinction between the levels of the network. In addition, it causes the regional film centers to lose their service identity and claim to adequate funding.
● *Participation in the Network Is Not Broad-Based.*	The New Jersey Library Network is primarily a public library operation. Resources of other types of libraries, especially academic ones, remain largely untapped. Services to these libraries are likewise limited. Without the means to encourage broader participation, the network cannot meet the legal mandate to act as a statewide system of libraries providing services to all citizens. The validity of the network concept declines as libraries and citizens bypass the network as a means to acquire information and materials.

The Commission believes that these findings are sufficient cause to consider a major statutory revision of the New Jersey Library Network structure and functions. The essential objectives of a revised statewide network are presented in the following table.

Table III-4

Improving the New Jersey Library Network

Desirable Objectives	**Description**
● *Open Participation by All Types of Libraries in the Network.*	Creation of programs that allow various types of libraries to assume network service roles.
● *Resource Sharing at All Levels of the Network.*	Creation of programs that promote, and financially assist, networking arrangements at the first level of the network *in addition* to the other levels.
● *Increase the Interaction Among Various Types of Libraries.*	Provision of a requirement in network law to encourage groups of libraries to assume a network service role.
● *Insure Maximum Flexibility in the Network Process.*	Adjustment of procedures to permit additional ways for requesting and receiving services.
● *Simplify the Administrative Structure of the Network.*	Authorization for the State Library to reduce the number of network arrangements at the higher levels of the network and to reorganize its advisory services in accordance with a new, decentralized network approach to services.
● *Expand the Range of Network Services.*	Formulation of detailed programs to improve both support services (i.e., locational devices) and actual network services, such as reference as well as to upgrade the outputs of the network, in general.
● *Utilize the Network Process to Stretch Library Resources and Funding.*	Use of network funding primarily for: (1) development of communication and locational devices to link libraries and find needed materials; (2) compensation to libraries accepting network roles for services provided to other libraries.

The changes suggested in Table III-4 are necessary in order to correct the serious problems in the present network approach. Without them the network is in danger of becoming an outdated and ineffective operation. Fortunately, it will not be necessary to 'reinvent the wheel' in order to make the network an effective tool for the provision of quality library services. There are a number of successful network programs in other states that already have achieved the goal for a revised New Jersey Library Network — they can serve as useful models. Furthermore, the State Library, and the present research and area libraries, together provide a stable foundation for changes in the current network. These libraries will most certainly play a vital part in a rebuilt New Jersey Library Network. The Commission feels that, under State Library guidance, a revised library network would strengthen the provision of services by every publicly-supported library in New Jersey.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Many issues face publicly-supported libraries in New Jersey. These issues grow out of certain basic pressures for change that cannot be ignored. The way each of these issues is addressed will help shape the nature of library services during the 1980s. Libraries have always played a quiet yet essential service role in the educational, informational, recreational, and cultural affairs of the State's citizens. In order that they may continue to delivery quality services, the issues facing libraries must be resolved, and without delay.

The *County and Municipal Government Study Commission* believes that the State must provide the means — the laws, the money, and the leadership — to help solve the problems of its libraries. *The Development of Libraries and Networks* presents the Commission's suggestions for dealing with many important library issues. It is the opinion of the Commission that its proposals would greatly improve the intergovernmental foundation for future library services in New Jersey. Accordingly, the conclusions and recommendations of this report are presented for consideration.

State Responsibility for the Library Function in New Jersey

Beginning in 1879, the State has increasingly encouraged the establishment of a wide range of libraries in New Jersey. The goal of all of these legislative actions remains the same — to promote equal access to adequate library services for all citizens. As a result, the State has a moral obligation to its citizens to continue to provide both leadership and financial assistance to the libraries it helped to create. It is therefore recommended that:

1. The State Library should be provided with sufficient resources to advise, assist and coordinate all publicly-supported libraries in New Jersey — in accordance with its statutory mandate prescribed in N.J.S.A. 18A:73-35.

Today, the Division of the State Library, Archives and History in the Department of Education has the primary responsibility to carry out the State's objectives regarding libraries. This agency must have the tools to continue promoting equal access to library services for all citizens of the State. In recent years, the legal and financial bases for the State Library's programs have been inadequate for this task.

Ability of Public Libraries to Gain Local Tax Support

The growth in local tax support to many public libraries is not sufficient to overcome the effects of inflation. On a statewide basis, the effective budgets of public libraries declined at a rate of 3 percent per year. Without some way of protecting the purchasing power of library budgets, service quality will decline seriously. It is therefore recommended that:

2. The State should increase the authorized level of aid to public libraries provided in law.

The present authorization of State aid to public libraries was set in 1967. It is simply out of touch with the cost of library services at this point in time.

Shrinking Financial Incentives: Millage Rates and Aids

The method for calculating the minimum level of local property tax support to municipal libraries should be changed. At present, the tax base is measured on the basis of the local assessed valuation of property. This method is not uniform and cannot keep pace with inflated property values. It is therefore recommended that:

3. The property valuation that is taxed in support of free public libraries should be changed from the assessed valuation to the equalized valuation as certified by the State's Division of Taxation in the Department of Treasury. These equalized valuations should be the same as the valuations used in the calculation of per capita aid to public libraries.

Changing to an equalized basis of property valuation will provide municipal libraries with a more uniform and flexible means of local tax support. In addition, this change will insure a better level of support for any new municipal libraries in the future. This recommendation applies to N.J.S.A. 40:54-8, as amended.

* *

The burden of supporting public libraries has always been a partnership between State and local government. However, the State has not assumed its share of this burden during the last few years. It is time for the State to renew its role in the State-local partnership to support public libraries. It is therefore recommended that:

4. The appropriation of State per capita aid to public libraries should be provided at the level authorized by statute. This level of aid should be considered as the minimum amount necessary to promote the goal of equal access to public library services in New Jersey. In addition, State aids to public libraries should be a separate line item in the State Library's budget.

It is essential that a "full funding" of public library aid programs be made in all future budget years. Public libraries cannot absorb further cuts in State assistance without endangering the availability of services. Local government budgets are restricted by law and their revenues are growing at a slower rate than State revenues. The State must assume its fair share of supporting public libraries.

* *

The formula for State per capita aid to public libraries needs to be modified in order to remain an incentive for better local tax support. The formula should also be automatically adjustable so that the incentive is not lost in future years. It is therefore recommended that:

5. The State per capita aid program to libraries should be improved by adding a new capitation rate of $1.50. This rate of aid should be provided to all municipalities and counties making an annual public library appropriation that is more than three-fifths (3/5) of a mill upon their equalized property valuations. The calculation of this new level of aid should save harmless all amounts of per capita aid distributed in the previous State fiscal year. Furthermore, additional capitation and millage rates should be made part of the per capita aid law whenever 20 percent of all municipalities and counties become eligible for the highest existing capitation rate of aid.

An adjustment in the per capita aid law recognizes the need to maintain an incentive for increased local tax support. This change also safeguards the amounts of aid distributed to all communities not qualifying for the new aid level. A safeguard is necessary in case there is not a full appropriation for State per capita aid. Finally, the recommendation establishes a principle under which new rates of aid can be set into law. (Applicable to N.J.S.A. 18A:74-3).

Promoting Access to Nearby Libraries

The promotion of access to library services is the basis for the entire State interest in library development. One of the best methods of providing access to nearby library services is to establish branches of main libraries. The State already has an aid program to promote new branches of county libraries. This program should be expanded to also promote the continued operation of existing branches of municipal libraries. It is therefore recommended that:

6. The incentive aid program for branch library development should include support for existing municipal branch libraries. Eligibility would be based upon having an average increase of less than 5 percent, over the last 3 budget years, in local appropriations to the municipal library. Each eligible municipal library would receive an amount of aid equal to 50 percent of the average budget of its branches or $25,000., whichever is less. In return for such aid, participating libraries will be required to maintain all branches in operation during the following calendar year, unless an exception is granted by the State Library for sufficient cause. In addition, participating libraries should meet minimum standards for operation of branch libraries that may be established by the State Library, within three years of first receipt of branch library aid.

A number of larger municipalities with extensive branch library systems have had financial problems in keeping certain branches open. The State has consistently sought to promote nearby, local library services. This program is designed to preserve branch library service in municipalities demonstrating financial need.

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Pressures on the Provision of Library Services

The State Library has always recognized the vital link between a critical level of resources and the provision of quality services. However, there needs to be a greater emphasis at the State level to promote local investment in the basic services — book-borrowing, reading, and reference. Hence, the State should initiate a voluntary program of developing local library collections. It is therefore recommended that:

7. A new program of State library aid should be established to promote the assessment and development of public library collections of materials. The objectives of this new aid program would be: (1) provide a uniform method for evaluation of local library services and materials, (2) underwrite the cost of the evaluation process, and (3) make State aid specifically available to help purchase materials needed for adequate local library service. This program for resource development should be optional and made available upon formal application by individual public libraries. Approved applicants would agree to conduct an evaluation of community library service needs in a manner determined by the State Library. Participants would agree, again at their option, to pursue a three-year phased program of improvement based upon the resulting evaluation of community needs. In addition, the State Library may request such information as it requires to administer the program and assess statewide public library resource needs. This program should be made renewable after a period of years. Any distribution of aid under this program should save harmless the amount of per capita aid distributed in the previous State fiscal year.

The purchase of new library materials is the lifeblood of libraries. This program recognizes the limits of existing per capita aid to public libraries. It provides additional aid dedicated to the improvement of public library collections in order to satisfy community needs.

8. A second new program of State library aid should be established to promote the preservation of valuable or historical materials in certain libraries. The objective of this program would be to recognize that a number of libraries are financially unable to maintain valuable and irreplacable stores of knowledge and history without reducing the provision of basic services. Upon identifying such libraries, the State Library should make available aid monies, on a continuing basis, to define and maintain such materials in the form of special collections. No less than 75 percent of such aid monies should be reserved for county and municipal libraries. In return for such aid, libraries would be required to maintain or develop special collections in accordance with regulations established by the State Library, including the locating, cataloging, and conservation of these materials. In addition, each participating library would make listings of these special collections available for purposes of the statewide network, upon the advice of the State Library. The distribution of aid under this program should save harmless the amount of per capita aid provided in the previous State fiscal year.

This "preservation of materials" aid program recognizes the need to help support certain libraries with specialized resources. There are a number of libraries that have developed their collections over a long period of time and now possess valuable materials on specific subjects or persons. These collections are often historical or ethnic in nature. The preservation program will assume some of the burden of maintaining and developing special collections. In addition, it will make these resources more generally accessible to citizens of the State.

* *

Another aspect to the issue of pressures on the provision of library services involves local *school* libraries. The traditional role of the State Library in assisting school libraries does not fit well in the context of the Public School Education Act of 1975 and its regulations. As a result, there has been a serious erosion of the State Library's leadership role in developing school library services. It is therefore recommended that:

9. A more clearly defined mission should be established in law for school library services and for a State Library program of assistance to school media centers. In addition, the Department of Education should establish minimum standards for school media programs as part of the "Thorough and Efficient" education approval process.

A clear State interest in school library services needs to be established in law. In addition, while the State Library has an administrative role in the development of public libraries, it has virtually none for school libraries. This recommendation would address both problems.

Relationships Between Library Boards and Governing Bodies

A number of chronic problems have been identified concerning the relationship between library boards and local governing bodies. Provisions in library law dealing with this relationship have been a constant source of confusion and dissension. It is therefore recommended that:

10. The chief financial officer of each municipality and county maintaining a free public library according to statute should receive quarterly records of local library appropriations, other public revenues, State aids, expenditures, and year-end balances. This information should be reported according to local budgetary procedures established by the Division of Local Government Services in the Department of Community Affairs and made available to the State Library. The library boards should retain responsibility for the manner in which expenditures are made in support of library service. Receipt and disbursal of "other public revenues" should remain in accordance with the provisions of existing library law.

The Commission has always supported the concept of uniform management of municipal and county service functions. The necessary autonomy of library boards to decide matters related to library service is accepted as an exception to this rule. However, local governing bodies must be accountable to their constituent taxpayers. Therefore a uniform accounting of library revenues and expenditures should be established to provide an accurate financial picture of the library service function to local government officials.

11. All references to the mayor or other chief executive officer should be clarified in statutes governing municipal libraries. Separate provisions designating the particular official in each form of municipal government should be made. Conforming amendments in various parts of Title 40 of the New Jersey Statutes should be made as required.

The ambiguity of the phrase "mayor or other chief executive officer" has led to a number of conflicts regarding the membership and activities of library trustee boards. A direct clarification is the best remedy for these situations.

12. The membership of the county library commission should be expanded to seven members. The two additional members should be residents of municipalities required by law to support the county library. Each of these two members should be appointed for a term of five years and serve in the same capacity, and with the same powers and duties, as present members of the library commission. In addition, four of the seven commissioners should be residents of member municipalities within five years from enactment of this provision. Any existing county board of library commissioners having at least three representatives from member municipalities may be waived from this provision with State Library approval.

A county library system usually comprises a wide geographical area and contains many municipalities. The commission should be enlarged in order to insure that the library service needs of all municipalities served by the county library are recognized.

13. Overall, the statutes in Chapters 33 and 54 of Title 40 governing county and municipal libraries should be redrafted. This revision should reflect necessary technical amendments and any additional policy changes adopted by the State Librarian, the State Library Advisory Council, and the Department of Education. Provisions should be made, for example, to allow for library jointures among municipalities and their respective counties.

The laws affecting public libraries have been adopted over a long period of time. A number of provisions no longer serve any purpose or relate to laws that have been superseded by new enactments. Consolidating and revising library laws would allow a more efficient administration of library matters.

Role of Associations

A typical association possesses less than 40 percent of the resources in an average municipal library, even when excluding the larger municipal libraries from the comparison. Hence, many associations cannot single-handedly supply adequate library services to their communities. Therefore, the role of associations should be to assist county libraries in the provision of local library services. It is therefore recommended that:

14. Every municipal governing body wishing to provide library services or supplement county library services to the community by supporting an association, wholly or in part, should do so by contract with the association. Such contracts should specify what level of services the association will provide in accordance with the minimum standards for per capita aid in the respective municipalities. All contracts should be submitted to the State Library for approval and be a matter of public record.

The county library has the statutory mandate to provide adequate library service in all municipalities without free public libraries. In order to fulfill this mandate, it is necessary to specify the scope of services which the associations provide to such municipalities and this is best accomplished by contract. Formal contracts will allow better service coordination and avoids unnecessary duplication of services among associations and county libraries.

Stability for County Library Systems

A number of alternative actions are required in order to reduce or hopefully eliminate the many problems which stem from the present structure and service roles of county libraries. At least 5 major actions should be considered: (1) coping with future withdrawals from county library systems; (2) developing closer working relationships between associations and county libraries; (3) promoting the reorganization of county library systems to improve access to nearby services; (4) pooling financial resources in order to strengthen public library services throughout a county; and (5) reducing the burden on county libraries to provide network services. These objectives should be worked into any revision of library law. It is therefore recommended that:

15. All municipalities required by law to support a county library should have to give the board of freeholders a twelve-month written notice of intent to withdraw from the county library system. The period of notification would take effect subsequent to the calendar year in which notice is first given. A municipality failing to provide such notice would be required to continue supporting the county library for a period of two years subsequent to the year of withdrawal. In addition, notice of intended withdrawal should only be allowed subsequent to a municipal hearing on the proposed withdrawal, and the adoption of a municipal resolution supporting such withdrawal. Procedures for the process of withdrawal should be made a part of library law.

Except in the case of Morris County, there is no established procedure for leaving a county library system. This proposal would provide the means to consider the question of withdrawal at the local level. It would also give the county library a period of time to adjust to the loss of any municipalities from the county system.

16. Three options should be provided in law to reorganize the structure of an existing county library. Any option may be adopted upon completion of a study and referendum process. A study of county-wide

library services needs should be initiated either by the board of freeholders upon vote of the board or by written petition to the board from at least 10 percent of the residents served by the county library under N.J.S.A. 40:33-1 et seq. This study should be conducted by a temporary commission established by the freeholders for this purpose. The commision should file a report within one year either recommending one of the options for referendum or recommending against reorganization. The study and referendum process may be repeated after a period of years to allow reconsideration of available options, including the replacement of an option adopted in an earlier referendum. The three optional service structures are as follows:

A. Branch Development Option

The county library would provide a process of branch library development for all present member municipalities desiring such facilities. The county library would guarantee to each municipality either the establishment of a branch library within its borders or a joint branch with one or more adjacent municipalities where the library needs of a municipality fall below the new state standards for providing a separate branch. For all eligible municipalities, branches would be in operation within the first 3 years of the minimum term of membership in the county library system. In return for the establishment of a branch library, eligible municipalities will remain members of the county system for a minimum of five years. All other municipal members (those with associations or free public libraries) should continue to participate in the system, subject to the 12-month withdrawal provision. Each of these municipalities may, by resolution, petition the county library commissioners to become a part of the process of branch development.

B. Service Contract Option

The county library would offer a common contract for local library services to all municipalities required by law to support the county system. This contract should guarantee the provision of staff and materials at a level sufficient to insure compliance with state standards for library service in each member municipality. These resources should be made available at a location determined by each municipality. In return for contractual services, municipalities would remain members of the county system for a minimum of five years. Municipalities would accept or reject the contract offer by municipal resolution. All municipalities rejecting the contract would continue to participate in the county system, subject to the 12-month withdrawal provision.

C. Tax Base - Sharing Option

The board of freeholders would determine a sum of library tax revenues that is raised and distributed in the following manner: (1) A tax revenue pool to support library services would be created from a countywide tax on the total county apportionment valuation. The tax rate would

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not be less than one-fifteenth (1/15) of a mill nor greater than the millage rate presently applied on behalf of the county library; (2) The county library would receive annual funds from the total revenue pool at an amount equal to one-fifteenth of a mill on the total county-wide apportionment valuation plus 60 percent of the residual pool. The county library would no longer receive any sums from application of the dedicated library tax under N.J.S.A. 40:33-9 or from the tax procedure in N.J.S.A. 40:33-19 for area services; (3) Municipalities now exempt from the county library would receive the remaining 40 percent of the residual pool, to be appropriated to their respective public libraries. The State Library may approve a different pattern of residual pool distribution to municipalities, on request by the library study commission. The amount of revenue received by each municipality would be based on the ratio of each municipality's apportionment valuation to the total valuation for all municipalities eligible to receive revenue from the residual pool.

In return for adoption of the tax base-sharing option, the board of freeholders would direct the county library to make all of its services available to the residents of every municipality in the county.

In addition, the following provisions would become effective upon adoption of this option: (1) The study commission would continue to operate for an additional year in order to report on the progress of the plan and the possible need for an increase in the millage rate in future years; (2) Any municipality seeking to dissolve its municipal library by referendum would be required to wait at least 2 years subsequent to the adoption of the plan; (3) All distribution of revenue under the plan would save harmless the amount of local appropriations made to the municipal libraries in the previous calendar year.

Finally, any of the options to reorganize the service structure of the county library should be made recallable by referendum but no sooner than 3 years subsequent to the adoption of a particular option.

These proposals would provide the means for adjusting the service structure of county libraries where it is necessary, without involving the network process. Each proposal would also improve the access to nearby library services — a basic State goal and a preference of most citizens.

Tools Available for Local Library Development

Earlier recommendations addressed the improvement of local library service development. New programs were proposed to upgrade library collections, assist branch libraries, and preserve valuable library materials. The State Library has the central governmental role of managing both existing and proposed programs for developing local libraries. However, to accomplish these objectives, the State Library must have the administrative tools to carry out its programs. It is therefore recommended that:

17. The State Library should promulgate minimum standards for branch and station outlets of local libraries. The application of these new

standards should be adjusted in those cases where a library branch or station only serves a portion of a municipality. In addition, the State Library should require certain library statistics concerning these service outlets from libraries subject to such standards.

Regulations prescribing the distribution of library resources are necessary to the provision of equal access to nearby library services. The State Library must insure that resources allocated within a library system meet minimum standards for access to services. To do so it requires data on the resources of branches and stations which, at present, are not measured.

18. Per capita aid should be denied to any municipality or county whose public library fails to meet all minimum standards for receipt of this aid. The denial of aid should be made a part of the aid law and enforcable after any consecutive 3-year period of noncompliance with per capita aid standards. In addition, the denial of aid should be made at the discretion of the State Library after consideration of a local appeal for a waiver from this provision.

A number of libraries have persistently failed to meet certain standards for receipt of per capita aid. Present regulations allow for a partial penalty of reduction in aid because of noncompliance but without any time limit. This proposal provides a three-year limit to noncompliance, without which a number of libraries will persist in failing to meet all standards while continuing to receive some aid. Local library services can never be adequately provided if certain standards for service are consistently unmet.

State Responsibility for a Library Network

The State Library is directed by law to perform a number of duties on behalf of New Jersey's citizens. One of its major statutory duties is to coordinate a statewide system of libraries. This particular mandate is the foundation of the New Jersey Library Network. Through the process of networking, any citizen, using any library in the network, potentially has the means to utilize the resources of the *whole* community of libraries in New Jersey. It is therefore recommended that:

19. The legal and financial basis for the New Jersey Library Network should be strengthened as much as possible and without delay.

A viable, statewide library network can be the best way for the State to improve library services to its citizens on a statewide basis. However, the current network needs additional statutory and financial support in order to achieve its service potential.

Overall Performance of the Network Process

The functions of the network process are not adequately expressed in library law. The lack of a firm basis in law has created confusion both among those libraries performing and libraries receiving network services. One of the major problems in this regard is the limited availability of mechanisms to find information and materials throughout the network. It is therefore recommended that:

20. An ongoing process to develop finding mechanisms that improve the networking process among libraries should be made a part of a revised network program in library law.

The development of "tools" to locate information and materials is the forgotten element in the functions of the network. A new effort to create these devices is essential to improving the network process.

Distribution of Aid in Support of the Network

The current pattern of distribution of network financial aid illustrates the overlap beween local library and network library activities. The overlap in services creates tension among libraries and erodes the spirit of cooperation essential to an adequate network process. It is therefore recommended that:

21. The fiscal accountability of network functions supported by State aid should be improved in accordance with a revised network program in library law.

Without an improvement in network accountability, the willingness among many local libraries to cooperate in the network process will continue to decline.

22. State aid for network purposes should be made a separate line item in the State Library's budget.

It is time to recognize the importance of the statewide library network. Without a well-running network process, the ability of the State Library to improve statewide access to library services will be severely limited. The network must have its own financial base of support, and thus be more accountable for activities designed to improve access to services.

23. Financial support for regional audiovisual services should be shifted from a temporary federal subsidy to a stable form of new State aid to film centers providing these services. Several changes in the organization of existing film centers should also be made a part of a revised network program in library law: (1) the film centers should have fiscal and management autonomy from any public library in which they may be located; (2) the film centers should become an integral part of the network process under the direction of the State Library; and (3) service coordination with county audiovisual aid commissions should be made a requirement in law. In addition, these organizational changes should represent necessary preconditions to a State assumption of the costs for regional film services.

Audiovisual materials are the modern supplement to printed forms of communication. Hence, film resources and services are an integral part of the contemporary library function. It follows that the State should consider and treat film resources as a necessary element in providing adequate library services in New Jersey.

Role of Public Libraries in a Network Process

There are two instances where the overlap in local and network services is severe enough to question the continued validity of the network itself: (1) the dual service role of county libraries, which causes disruptions in the network process and; (2) the existence of networking at the local level of the network structure; where a significant amount of service activity is occurring. To address these problems it is therefore recommended that:

24. Changes should be made in a revised network program that eliminate, as much as possible, the conflicting service roles of county libraries.

The nature of existing law causes the dual role problem. The law is simply too ambiguous in regard to the structure and functions of the network.

25. A new program of aid assistance to promote services at the local level of the network structure should be made a part of a revised network program.

Currently, recognition and financial assistance to local network activities are lacking. State support for local networking can assist in progress towards the State's primary goal — promoting access to nearby library services.

Participation of Non-Public Types of Libraries in a Network

Broad participation among different types of libraries does not occur in the existing network process. In addition, many non-public types of libraries bypass the network in seeking back-up resources. It is therefore recommended that:

26. The active participation of all types of libraries should be made an integral part of a revised network program.

The resources of most libraries, other than the larger public libraries, remain untapped by the current network process. Without the means to increase participation in the network, the State Library cannot meet its mandate — coordination of a statewide system of libraries providing services to all citizens.

Joint Interests in Library Planning and Administration

A significant split in jurisdiction over the affairs of publicly-supported libraries exists at the State level. Hence, management of network activities by the State Library and the Department of Higher Education are independent of each other. It is therefore recommended that:

27. An administrative mechanism should be established to link the networking arrangements among academic libraries with the New Jersey Library Network. This device should preserve the autonomy of each approach and be made a part of the revised network program. In addition, this mechanism should be supported with State funds to provide the technical means for joining the various networking operations.

The separate approaches of the two State agencies are a necessary reality. However, the basic State goal of promoting access to library services requires coordination of all networking activities.

New Approaches to Networking

A number of major improvements should be made in the existing network structure and process. The overall objective of a revised library network would be to promote a maximum exchange of information and materials among all types of libraries in New Jersey. In this way, the primary State goal to promote access to quality library services can best be achieved on a statewide basis. It is therefore recommended that:

28. The structure and programs of the New Jersey Library Network should be revised in library law as follows:

A. First level

The first level of the network structure should be revised in library law as a program to establish Library Service Cooperatives (LSCs). All types of libraries would be eligible to participate in this program. To form an LSC, a group of libraries would make an application for designation to the State Library. The State Library would promulgate regulations regarding the conditions of membership in the organization.

The services to be provided by the LSCs should be made a part of library law. Examples of potential services include: local interlibrary loan and reference services; borrowing privileges; promotion of newly acquired materials and special collections; local delivery services; user orientation programs; and mutual notice of new acquisitions to other member libraries.

The governance of the LSCs should also be made a part of library law. Each LSC would incorporate as a non-profit organization, administered by a board of representatives from the member libraries and include written bylaws in accordance with State Library regulations. This organization would be legally responsible for the receipt of State funds and the provision of services. In addition, each LSC would operate under the administration of a regional network organization that may also be designated by the State Library.

Any federation or cooperative established under existing library law would be eligible to receive designation as an LSC upon conforming to the legal provisions for such designation. Finally, the State Library may request any reports or statistics necessary for the overall administration of this program.

B. Second level

The second level of the network structure should be revised in library law as a program to establish Regional Resource Associations (RRAs). All types of libraries would be eligible to participate in this program. To form an RRA, a group of libraries would make an application for designation to the State Library. Certain conditions for designation should be made a part of library law, namely: (1) there should be no more than seven RRAs designated within the State; (2) a group of libraries seeking designation should identify at least two, and no more than seven, members of the group to act as central libraries for the organization; (3) each central library should meet minimum resource standards determined by the State Library; (4) there should be a least two types of libraries (e.g., public, school, community college, college, university, special, and association) acting as central libraries; and (5) each RRA should be required to expend state funds, and provide services, through its central libraries.

The services to be provided by the RRAs should be made a part of library law. Examples of potential services include: regional interlibrary loan and reference services; special telecommunication services; development of resource listings to improve document identification and locagion, e.g., union lists; development of special bibliographies of materials; professional training seminars on the selection of library materials; professional orientation seminars on the use of extensive reference services; preservation of valuable materials; and both photocopy and delivery services to facilitate interlibrary loans.

The governance of the RRAs should also be made a part of library law. Each RRA would incorporate as a non-profit organization administered by an executive board of representatives from the member libraries. This organization would be legally responsible for the receipt of State funds and the provisions of services. The bylaws of each RRA should be in accordance with State Library regulations and include specific provisions for a council of all member libraries. These councils would have the authority to approve or reject the operating budget of the RRAs as proposed by the executive board. In addition, the councils should advise the boards concerning the nature of services to be provided to member libraries.

The funding of operational RRAs should be determined in library law as the sum of a fixed annual grant and a capitation rate in terms of dollars. The authorization of State funds for the purposes of RRAs should be sufficient to support the provision of services required by the State Library. Additional funds should be made available for distribution to any local service cooperatives administered by an RRA. Funds not allocated to local service cooperatives should be carried over to the following budget year for any purposes approved by the regional council.

The procedures of an operational RRA should allow for member libraries to request services from any central library in the RRA or from central libraries in other RRAs as well. However, each central library should respond to service requests from its respective RRA as a first priority.

The transition from the existing statewide library network to a revised network program should be made according to State Library regulations. In addition, the provision of a new network library law should repeal or amend as necessary all existing statutes concerning network programs administered by the State Library. Each library contracting with the State Library for network services under existing law should be offered a role as a central library in the second service level of a revised network program.

C. Third level

The third level of the network structure should be revised in library law as a program to establish a single Bibliographic Access Center (abbreviated as BAC) in New Jersey under the direction of the State Library. One library should be designated by the State Library to perform the services required of this center. Ideally, this library would possess certain qualifications established by State Library regulation including: (1) a commitment to serve all citizens of the State; (2) a long-standing record of service as a public institution; (3) recognition as a major research library; (4) demonstrated technical expertise in library automation including the use and programming of computers; (5) previous experience in providing services related to the objectives of the center, and (6) a willingness to assume a portion of the operating costs for the center. The overall objective of the BAC should be to provide the means for networking among all central libraries in the various RRAs and to any other libraries desiring assistance. Overall, the center should provide the foundation for a State bibliographic data base that can be linked to interstate networking arrangements among libraries.

The services to be provided by the BAC should be made a part of library law. Examples of potential services include: computerization of all cooperative holdings of the various central libraries, e.g., an expanded union list of serials; an automated location file of New Jersey State documents; an automated numerical register to facilitate interlibrary loans; an on-line computer service to all central libraries within 3 years of designation as the BAC; reference search services to all central libraries and to any other library upon request; and incorporation of other cooperative holdings (of any autonomous network within or outside the state) into the center's data base.

The funding for the BAC should be determined in library law as the sum of a fixed annual grant and a fixed fee for services to libraries other than the central libraries. In addition, certain one-time costs to establish the center should be supported by State funds upon negotiation with the State Library. The BAC should perform all services by contract with the State Library. This contract should be approved by majority vote of the RRA councils before execution.

29. The overall level of State financial assistance to support the revised network structure and programs should be no less than 50 percent above the authorized level of aid for network services provided in N.J.S.A. 18A:74-1 et seq. In addition, no less than 75 percent of the total network funds should be reserved for the purposes of the library service cooperatives and the regional resource associations.

30. State aid for regional audiovisual library purposes should be made a separate line item in the State Library's budget.

The proposal to revise the New Jersey Library Network is a comprehensive one. A new network prescribed in law should improve the eixsting situation significantly. In accepting these proposals, New Jersey will have taken a major step toward providing statewide access to library services for all of its citizens.

ACHIEVING EQUAL ACCESS TO QUALITY LIBRARY SERVICES IN NEW JERSEY

Libraries affect each and every one of us in some way during the course of our lives. Often without people realizing it, library services are woven into the conduct of their daily affairs – assisting in the process of education, in making business decisions, in scientific and policy research; and in the pursuit of cultural enrichment. In short, libraries are an integral part of the basic fabric of our society.

Unfortunately, libraries blend in so well with our daily activities that they often disappear from view. We tend to take libraries, and their services, for granted without always considering their needs. They often get lost in the shuffle of priorities and the battle for scarce funds. As a result, many libraries are overextended in their capacity to provide services.

Publicly-supported libraries have always had to rely on the willingness of government to recognize the critical point in their financial affairs. As the 1980's begin, libraries are increasingly hard pressed to meet impending fiscal realities within the present framework of federal, state, and local support. To maintain the status quo, on the other hand, could prove even costlier in that the broad service role of libraries would be weakened. Libraries contribute significantly to the quality of our society and therefore government must act on behalf of its citizens to preserve these institutions and assure them continuing progress.

Supporting Libraries in New Jersey

State government has historically promoted the establishment of libraries and the development of improved library services throughout New Jersey. The goal of all of these efforts has remained the same — *equal access to quality library services for all citizens*. Most library laws and regulations adopted over the years have contributed to this basic goal. However, time has a way of eroding the best of intentions. The most recent passage of major State legislation for libraries occurred in the late 1960s. A solid basis was established for a state-local partnership in the provision of local library services and statewide interlibrary cooperation. At the time, these laws placed New Jersey in the forefront of State-level efforts to promote quality library services for all citizens; today, this description is no longer accurate.

New Jersey's existing library laws are an inadequate basis for library services in the coming decade. After a dozen years of service, the State's library aid program is out of touch with the costs of present-day services. Consequently, there is too much pressure on local government to make up the difference in library support — especially in the face of spending limitations and rising costs in other service areas.

At the same time, a number of library activities promoted by these laws are also out of date. New priorities for library development, technological changes, and better approaches to library networking have taken place in recent years. Many of these innovations have already proven themselves in other states. In contrast, New Jersey's provisions to develop better services are locked into the past. The State's library policies and programs of the 1960s are not capable of dealing with either the financial needs or the service opportunities that are emerging in the 1980s. It is time for New Jersey to once again renew its role in promoting statewide access to library services.

Toward Equal Access to Quality Library Services

New Jersey must continue to move toward this fundamental library service goal. Further progress will mean building upon the best aspects of existing laws and programs without being bound by them. Past accomplishments in obtaining aid, meeting standards, and establishing a library network have certainly not been in vain. Taken together, they have been an important step toward achieving the goal of equal access to library services. In many respects, existing library laws have provided the foundation for future activities. Yet changes must be made if libraries are to retain their commitments to this goal.

The proposed new state plan for library services articulates the types of change needed in New Jersey. This plan, when completed, will provide a broad framework of financial, legal, professional, an service objectives designed ultimately to reach the equal access goal. Obviously, not all objectives can be addressed at once. In seeking to implement this plan for library services, the Department of Education will have to set realistic priorities, given current financial and other limitations in state and local resources.

The first imperative is to preserve the present level of services in New Jersey. Safeguarding the foundation for quality library services will require, at a minimum, early achievement of several objectives: (1) better state and local

The first imperative is to preserve the present level of services in New Jersey. Safeguarding the foundation for quality library services will require, at a minimum, early achievement of several objectives: (1) better State and local government financial support for libraries; (2) additional development programs to maintain local services; and (3) revision of the network structure to increase the participation of libraries as well as to broaden citizen access to statewide library resources. Without these measures, New Jersey's libraries will be unable to sustain their broad service role in the years ahead. The key to this challenge remains continued State support for the longstanding goal of equal access to quality library services.

The Next Step: Legislation

This has become a time of decision for libraries across the nation. The passage of Public Law 93-568 in 1974 marked the beginning of a federally-funded, public review of existing library services and future library needs in every state of the union. During the past 2 years, citizen conferences on libraries have been held around the country. These conferences have resulted in broad proposals for future development of libraries in their respective states. This kind of library review is also underway at the national level. In 1979, a

White House Conference on Libraries was held to evaluate federal policies for library development in the various states.

New Jersey has actively participated in this nationwide evaluation of libraries and library services. Under the direction of the State Library, the course charted by the New Jersey Conference on Libraries is being carried forward — in the development of the new state plan for library services. Goals and objectives to improve services are emerging from the new State plan. Generally, better funding, improved development of services and a revised network program appear to be the immediate priorities. The next step is new State legislation.

The Commission believes that its recommendations for libraries in New Jersey offer the means to reach these objectives. Each proposal is a balanced approach — falling between the extremes of total statutory revision and maintaining the status quo — to recurring problems facing libraries in the State. Taken together, the Commission's recommendations provide the framework for legislative action to renew the State's historical role in supporting the development of its libraries. With improved laws and better funding, New Jersey will continue to progress toward the goal of equal access to quality library services for all citizens.

Appendix

Highlights of
PUBLIC HEARING
before
County and Municipal Government Study Commission
on
Draft Report "The Development of Libraries and Networks"

Held:
January 11, 1980
Assembly Chamber
State House
Trenton, New Jersey

Barbara F. Weaver Asst. Commissioner of Education & New Jersey State Librarian	Concurs with direction of the report. Suggests a statute allowing incremental changes in the network rather than establishing a new system.
Drew Burns, President New Jersey Library Association	Opposes recommendation 10 calling for library funds to be administered by a municipality's chief financial officer as leading potentially to the loss of board autonomy; a local option is preferred. Supports recommendation 18, cutting off State aid to libraries not meeting standards, but subject to equalization aid provisions of the Library Development Committee. Raises questions on recommendation 23, reorganization of film centers, as well as on recommendations deal with networks.
Anne Ida King, President-Elect Educational Media Association of New Jersey	Recommends that School Library/Media Centers be designated as essential school services rather than support services. Supports the mandating of Library/Media Centers for every school.
Peter Cannici, President Board of Trustees Passaic Public Library	Deplores cuts in State aid; supports full funding and additional monies; raises questions as to the omission of a study of trustee relationships with a number of library interests. Calls for local government "to be more responsive to library boards." Questions a number of statements in the report and calls for more study.

William B. Wahl, President
N.J. County Library
Commissioners Association

(1) Recommends "that any municipality withdrawing from the county library system be required by law to spend a minimum of 1/3 mill on equalized valuation for library services."

(2) Recommends that in wording the referendum questions if it is clear that a "Yes" vote will result in withdrawal from the county system and a reduction in services provided by the county library.

(3) Supports recommendations 2, 3, and 4, dealing with the level of aid to public libraries and regarding full funding as a minimum amount necessary to provide equal access with provisions made to reflect inflation.

(4) Concurs with recommendation 6 concerning support of branch libraries, but suggests its expansion to county libraries, as well.

(5) Recommends that branches be eligible for collection development aid.

(6) Suggests that a 15-month notice of intent to withdraw from a county library does not provide stability but merely slows the death rate.

(7) Recommends "rewording of recommendation 16 to allow for a selection of a combination of options."

(8) Recommends that guidelines for a study committee be clearly defined.

(9) Recommends that Option A should allow for combination of two or more municipalities into a branch in accordance with minimum standards.

(10) Recomends that Option 16C, tax-pool sharing, should be available to all counties.

(11) Recommends addition of a fourth option to recommendation 16 permitting a referendum on the funding of county libraries from general county revenues.

(12) Recommends a fifth option under recommendation 16, providing for enabling legislation allowing freeholders to pass resolutions funding county library from general county revenue.

Hendrik Edelman, University Librarian Rutgers University	Underscores recommendations: 8, promoting the preservation of unique collections; 19, strengthening the legal and financial basis of the library network; 20, improving the legal basis of the network process; 21, calling for fiscal accountability of network functions supported by State aid; 23, stabilizing State aid for regional film centers; 26, calling for active participation for all types of libraries in the network program; 27, linking the Department of Higher Education and the State Library; and 28, establishing a new network structure based on local and regional cooperation, and a single bibliographical access center.
William J. LeKernec Exempt Library Association	Categorically opposes option 16C (tax base sharing), and supports options 16A and 16B. Supports recommendation 10 for uniform accounting and reporting of public monies "provided the responsibility for disbursement remains with the municipal library board of trustees." Endorses recommendation for networking among cooperative groups of libraries. Endorses the concept that "present per capita State aid should continue as matching funds, not to be used in lieu of new monies for new programs." Endorses strong State Library leadership in guiding and offering expertise to all networking projects.
Kenneth F. McPherson, Director Morris County Free Library	Raises a number of questions as to meanings of statements in the report. Is distressed by the alleged failure of the Commission to "explore or attempt to exploit the county level of government as the basis of support for libraries." Endorses the concept of a county pool of support. Recommends that this option (16C) be made available to Boards of Chosen Freeholders by resolution. Suggests referendum could be destructive. Suggests an increase in per capita aid to local and county libraries. Supports regional film centers but opposes fiscal and management autonomy from their parent library. Opposes the optional participation in county libraries as divisive and fragmenting.
John H. Livingstone, Director Monmouth County Library	Generally endorses the report. Agrees with its assessment on the "vital need for legislation to assure stability of funding." Recommends that State aid for new branches should be applicable to county libraries when needed. Supports the county tax base sharing (recommendation 16C) as offering the "opportunity for notable improvement in cooperative services to the public at a small cost." Suggests that this option be available to all counties with county libraries.

Marion Gerhart, Chairman Exempt Library Association of Morris County	Supports the use of equalized valuations in calculations of per capita aid to libraries. Supports full funding of public library aid programs. Supports the need for a new network design based on "willingness of libraries to form new relationships." Stresses that financial backing to support "new ventures in networking must not supplant aid currently being given to the local library." Criticizes S-3068. Opposes recommendation 16C (creation of a tax pool) as being in effect double taxation, penalizing locally-funded libraries, but supports recommendation 16A and B. Does not oppose "uniform accounting and reporting of public monies, provided the responsibility for control and disbursal remains with the municipal library Board of Trustees."
Alan R. Heinlein, Director Neptune Public Library	Opposes recommendation 16C but supports 16A and 16B. Calls for a five-year increment for dissolving a municipal library.
Robert W. Stewart, Director Asbury Park Public Library	Commends the report. Expresses objection to recommendation 16C. Supports recommendation 8 (preservation of materials). Supports recommendations 16A and 16B. Contends that "the ability of a library to leave a county system is a powerful prod and stimulant to good service."
Elizabeth O'Connor, President Health Sciences Library Association of New Jersey	Regrets the omission of health sciences libraries per se from the report. Recommends statutory funding for access to the regional medical library programs; the inclusion of health sciences libraries in all levels of the proposed network and designation of the Health Sciences Library Association as a regional resource association; and the appointment of an associate library for health sciences at the State Library.
Eugene Grim, Director South Jersey Regional Film Library	Endorses the recommendations concerning film centers in an improved library network structure. Urges more careful study for other recommendations.
Diana Herman Municipal Libraries of Somerset County	Endorses the recommendations concerning: the local nature of libraries; the enhancement of financial aid for local libraries; and assistance to a viable statewide library network. Opposes recommendation 16C (tax sharing) and supports 16A and 16B. Requests reconsideration of statutes providing for the taxation of non-members of county libraries for construction and maintenance of buildings and employee benefits. Supports a revised library network and a reduction in number of regional libraries.

Holly Lockhart, Mayor's Surrogate on Board of Trustees, Bernardsville Public Library	Supports the premise that local libraries are the backbone of library services. Opposes the tax sharing option 16C.
Alyce Bowers, Director Rockaway Township Library	Generally endorses the entire report. Specifically favors the first eight recommendations. Supports the tax sharing option but is concerned about the time-consuming, cumbersome process of a referendum and recommends that the freeholders be permitted to take action on the basis of a report by a study group. Deplores the internal feuding among libraries. Calls for additional funds for libraries and for a change in the legal basis to reduce competition for funds.
Karen Brown Morris-Union Federation	Supports the networking concept but calls for an increase in appropriations for networking, especially as related to technological changes in this area.
Thomas Racine Resident of Voorhees Township	Points to the lack of agreement among librarians. Calls for additional funds from federal sources for the support of libraries. Considers the library (and county health laws) a violation of basic New Jersey statutes.

Written Statements Submitted for the Hearing Record

William Koenig, Chairman The Association of N.J. County Audiovisual Aids Commissions	Endorses the proposed restructuring of library services and the incorporation of a networking system. Offers cooperation on a voluntary basis. Supports additional funding to build collections and provide specialized film holdings.
Jayne L. Hess, Director Phillipsburg Free Public Library	Expresses concern about the cost-benefit implications of the report's proposal in areas of small populations. Urges meetings to measure "benefits against costs."
Edwin Beckerman, Director Woodbridge Public Library	Expresses concern about the impact of cap legislation on libraries and other cultural and educational institutions, which could be the first to feel the effects of cutbacks. Calls for a realistic funding program as a help for focusing resources. Requests the "equivalent funding in current dollars to the original Library Aid Act of 1967."

C.M. Chase, Jr., President Board of Trustees Plainfield Public Library	Objects to increase in the level of bureaucracy and urges library funds to be spent by autonomous library boards. Endorses efforts to support all public libraries.
Catherine East Camden County Chapter of Exempt Libraries Association	Opposes option 16C and endorses the contract basis for county services.
Asbury Park Free Public Library Board of Trustees, Warren B. Meyer, President	Endorse "many of the recommendations contained in the report." Support the networking concepts. Support the expansion of State aid to local libraries. Criticizes recommendation 16C on tax sharing but support 16A and 16B.
Ellen Thorne Morris Executive Board of the Friends of Asbury Park Free Public Library	Generally supports the recommendations but opposes option 16C. Also supports preservation of materials (8).
Lincoln Park Public Library	Opposes legislation that will "stabilize the position of a county library system at the expenses of local library funds and services." Supports "mutual assistance programs which can be implemented successfully without burdensome costs to any one community." Welcomes new state programs as long as present funding is not endangered.
Peter J. Yannotta, Director Library of the Chathams	By resolution urges the strengthening of local municipal libraries and is "unalterably opposed to Recommendation 16 which would counteract the present legislation which exists in Morris County."
Jack W. Owen, President New Jersey Hospital Association	Endorses position expressed previously by Mrs. O'Connor.
Nadine J. Newcomb, Director Glassboro Public Library	Deplores the tone of paragraphs relating to the Association Libraries. Questions the contract provisions of recommendation 16. Urges correction of recommendations concerning Association Libraries.

Clifton Public Library Salvatore L. Stingo, Director	Requests that library laws be more explicit in defining the authority and autonomy of library boards. Calls for greater control of salary budget and operating budget. Requests statutory ability to apply surpluses in one year to subsequent years. Requests that the library directors be recognized in library law. Suggests that the library board be elected by the citizens and that the library budget be approved by the voters. Questions the need for resource-sharing and networking provisions.
Beverly Groffman, President Board of Trustees Aberdeen-Matawan Public Library	Questions recommendations requiring uniform local budgeting and procedures. Opposes the recommendation for transferring the fiscal responsibilities to the municipal fiscal officer. Supports recommendation 4 for full funding. Opposes recommendation 16C – tax sharing. Will probably endorse recommendation 28 on networks.
Robert Ross, Convener Camden-Gloucester Area Library	By resolution welcomes proposals concerning additional funds for network programs but reserves judgment on specifics of Regional Resource Associations.
Albert D. Addis, Director McCowan Memorial Library	Endorses position of Mrs. Newcomb concerning Association Libraries.
Sara H. Eggers, Director Old Bridge Public Library and President of Directors, Libraries of South Middlesex	Supports full funding and additional appropriations to adjust for inflation. Supports continuing autonomy for libraries. Calls for both fiscal autonomy as well as financial accountability for libraries.